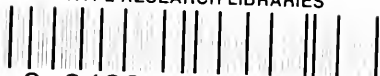


NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 07954423 9



WALTER·MERRIAM·PRATT

ar
ct

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

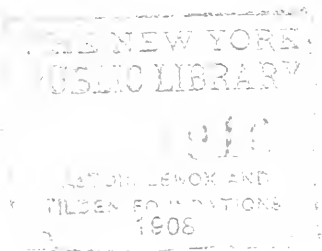
THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

BY
WALTER MERRIAM PRATT

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS
FROM ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPHS



BOSTON
SAMPSON PUBLISHING COMPANY
1908



Copyright, 1908, by
SAMPSON PUBLISHING COMPANY

First impression, June, 1908

*Printed by The Sparrell Print
Boston, Massachusetts*

The author dedicates this book to Captain James H. Smyth, Lieutenant Olin D. Dickerman, Lieutenant Harry J. Kane, and the enlisted men of the Eighth Company, Coast Artillery Corps, with whom he served in Chelsea on Provost Guard during the week following the fire.

8.
1/2

Nov. 12/18

Smyth



VIEW OF THE BURNING CITY FROM POWDERHORN HILL.

PREFACE

This book is intended by its author to be a story of THE BURNING OF CHELSEA as he saw it,—a contribution to local history based on personal knowledge and observation. No one man saw, or could see, all the phases of the conflagration, but the writer saw more than most. He was actively engaged during the entire course of the fire in the saving of persons and property, and was able to closely observe the whole progress of the flames. He served as a volunteer fireman for many hours and afterward on provost guard, being at work continuously for forty-eight hours without sleep. As he was thus present during the entire period of greatest stress, his narration consists of first-hand facts.

It was thought advisable to add chapters on the history of Chelsea, and some

PREFACE

phases of the period immediately following the fire, for the information of those not familiar with the city, and also a chapter on the future of the city.

The illustrations are from photographs, and the author's thanks for courteous permission to use them is due to Frank Roy Fraprie, Robert Buck Jeffers, of Chelsea, Mass., *Leslie's Weekly*, William J. McClintock, Frank Thompson, the *Utica Saturday Globe*, and Royal S. Wentworth.

Mr. Jeffers is maker of the frontispiece, and pictures on pages 56, 78, and 102.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

Historical Chelsea	15
------------------------------	----

CHAPTER II

Statistics of the Fire	31
----------------------------------	----

CHAPTER III

The Start	39
---------------------	----

CHAPTER IV

Beyond Control	52
--------------------------	----

CHAPTER V

Under Control	72
-------------------------	----

CHAPTER VI

Night among the Ruins	75
---------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VII

Day Dawns upon the Ruins	83
------------------------------------	----

CONTENTS

CHAPTER VIII

The Firemen	87
-----------------------	----

CHAPTER IX

The Militia	93
-----------------------	----

CHAPTER X

Expressions of Sympathy	104
-----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XI

The Relief Work	109
---------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XII

Chelsea's Future	134
----------------------------	-----

ILLUSTRATIONS

View of the Burning City from Powderhorn Hill	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	Opp. Page
The Bellingham-Cary House	16
The Pratt House, built about 1700	18
Broadway before the Fire, looking South from Bellingham	22
Broadway, a few Weeks after the Fire, looking South from Bellingham	24
Ruins of the Baptist Church and City Hall	32
The Lynn Engine destroyed by the Flames	34
Start of the Fire near the Everett Line	38
Responding to the First Alarm	42
Granite Block, Dynamited during the Fire	48
A Boston Fire-boat fighting the Fire	56
Brown Stone Houses Fared no Better than Wooden Tenements	56
Junction of Washington Avenue and Broadway before the Fire	58
Residence of Ex-Mayor Thomas Strahan before and after the Fire	62
Boston and Albany Railroad Bridge, with Wrecked East Boston Bridge and Burning Oil Tanks in Background	68

ILLUSTRATIONS

	Opp. Page
The Fitz Public Library before and after the Fire	70
Where the Fire was stopped on Sixth Street .	74
Ruins of the Central Congregational Church .	78
A Vast Expanse of Ruins	82
The Highland School before and after the Fire	84
Shurtleff Street before and after the Fire . .	86
Chief Spencer during the Fire	88
The Eighth Company, Coast Artillery, keeping back the Crowd in Winnisimmet Square .	94
Troop A, First Squadron of Cavalry . . .	96
Granite Crumbled to Gravel under the Heat .	102
The Court House, used as City Hall after the Fire	108
The Bread Line	114
Effect of Fire on Granite Walls and Curbing	120
The Shurtleff School before and after the Fire	128
Map showing Burned District	134
County Road, in the Residential Section . .	136
The Wentworth Residence, among the Places not Destroyed	140
Residence of Ex-Mayor Pratt, in the Prattville District, One of the Many Attractive Places in Chelsea not Burned	144

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL CHELSEA

Before relating the story of THE BURNING OF CHELSEA it seems that a slight sketch of the history of the city may be appropriate. Thousands of people read, with mingled interest and horror, newspaper accounts of the burning of Chelsea, who had previously only heard of the city in a casual way, perhaps in connection with the unfair and time-worn expression, "Dead as Chelsea." Few people who have not made a study of the matter realize how much Chelsea stands for in history. To quote from a speech made by the late historian, Judge Mellen Chamberlain, L.L.D., at the laying of the corner-stone of the Prattville Schoolhouse, the city is associated with more really "first

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

things" than any other city of this State or continent.

The first settler, Samuel Maverick, landed on the shore of what are now the United States Naval Hospital grounds in 1624. In 1625 he built a fortified house near the water's edge, which, according to the historical tablet, erected near Chelsea Bridge, was the first house in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Here Governor Winthrop was entertained in 1630. In 1631 the first ferry in the country was established here, the landing being near the present pier on the government grounds, where the first county road in the colony, ending at Salem, began. There is a story to the effect that Maverick's house was attacked by the Indians, but being completely repulsed, they never attacked again. Maverick traded with the Indians, and in this way acquired some five thousand acres of land, comprising what is now Chelsea, Revere, Winthrop, and Saugus, then known as Winnisimmet.



THE BELLINGHAM-CARY HOUSE

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

In 1630 Noddle's Island, now East Boston, was sold to him. About 1632 Maverick sold Winnisimmet to Richard Bellingham, afterward governor, after whom Mount Bellingham was named. Bellingham built the Cary house, which is still standing, and used it as a shooting lodge, his home being in Boston. Later it was bought by the Carys and greatly altered. Tradition says that British troops were quartered in the house and an officer committed suicide there. There is a secret chamber in the top of the house, reached only by a peculiar passage, which winds about the chimney from the cellar. Although the house is two hundred years old, it is still used as a dwelling, and fortunately escaped the fire.

Until January 10, 1739, Chelsea was a part of Boston. On that date, by the terms of an act passed by the Great and General Court, that part of Boston known as Winnisimmet Village, Rumney Marsh, and Pullin's Point, including

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

what is now known as Chelsea, Revere, Winthrop, and Saugus was, "in consideration that they had long since built a meeting-house and supported the same," set off as a town, to be known by the name of Chelsea.

The first naval battle in the history of the United States occurred in Chelsea Creek on May 27, 1775. The conflict occurred between the Provincials and the British troops. Its outcome was that the armed schooner "Diana" was captured by the former and burned on the Chelsea shore.

During the siege of Boston, in 1776, revolutionary troops under command of Colonel Gerrish were stationed in that part of Chelsea known as Prattville, and General George Washington on a tour of inspection took dinner at the Pratt homestead. This house was demolished in 1855. Its doorstep was built into the wall of Washington Park, where it may still be seen. The other old Pratt house which is still standing belonged



THE PRATT HOUSE, BUILT ABOUT 1700

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

to the same family. It is the second oldest house in Chelsea to-day, having been built about 1700. It was in this house that Increase Mather (president of Harvard College from 1684 to 1701) took refuge from the persecution of Governor Andros.

In 1802 The Chelsea Bridge and Salem Turnpike Company received a charter, and during that year and the next built a toll bridge between Chelsea and Charlestown. Up to this time the only way to reach Boston with a loaded team was through Malden, Medford, Cambridge, Roxbury, and over Boston Neck, the trip usually requiring a whole day.

On February 28, 1828, the State ceded to the General Government the property now used for the Naval and Marine hospitals.

In 1831 an act was passed giving Boston the exclusive control of county buildings and relieving Chelsea from all expense attached to them. If at any

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

time Chelsea should wish to be set off to another county, Boston has no power to appear in opposition.

In 1831 Francis B. Fay and others, acting for a proposed ferry company, purchased of Thomas Williams his farm and ferry for the sum of \$22,500. The company, which still exists, was incorporated in 1833.

In 1832 the first store in the village was built at the corner of Broadway and Everett Avenue, by John Low, and he was ridiculed by his friends for locating a store so far out of the way, as they said there would be few or no dwellings near him for twenty years. In this store were kept dry goods, groceries, medicine, the post-office, and baiting for horses. This being the only public place in the village, it was a general resort for the few early inhabitants, and records show that many pleasant evenings were spent there by Major Chase, Squire Knapp, Samuel Batchelder, Thomas Pratt, Dr. Stedman, Colonel Fay, Joseph

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

and Charles Hanscom, and the "Ferry hands."

The first postmaster was Rev. Horatio Alger, followed by Abel Bowen and then Benjamin Dodge.

In 1835 the town house was built. The town appropriated \$3000. The building committee expended \$3036.33, and for this excess "asked the indulgence of the town."

The first fire in Chelsea of which there is any record occurred in 1834, in Winnisimmet Square. There was no engine in Chelsea at the time, but No. 15 came over from Boston. After this fire the town bought an engine, and in 1835 the original Chelsea No. 1 was bought, and a house built for it in the square. In 1837 a second engine was bought for \$150, and a company organized under the name Volunteers No. 2, with quarters on Park Street.

On February 22, 1841, a narrow strip of land extending from Malden, Melrose, and well into Wakefield, known as the

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

Panhandle, was set off to the town of Saugus.

On March 19, 1846, North Chelsea, now Revere and Winthrop, was set off, reducing the town to its present size, which is about two and one quarter square miles or fourteen hundred and forty-one acres.

In February, 1849, the Grand Junction Railroad was granted a charter to run from East Boston through Chelsea to Boston, thus giving Chelsea railroad connection with the outside world.

In February, 1857, as the population was in excess of twelve thousand, the town petitioned the Legislature for a city charter, and on March 13 it was granted. On March 23 the charter was presented to the town and accepted by a vote of seven hundred and thirty-three to one hundred and seven. In the same year the Boston and Chelsea Horse Railroad received a charter to run from Revere along Broadway to Boston, and at the same time the Winnisimmet Rail-



BROADWAY BEFORE THE FIRE, LOOKING SOUTH FROM BELLINGHAM

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

road got a charter to run from Prattville through Washington Avenue, Park and Winnisimmet streets, to and across the ferry.

When the Civil War broke out Chelsea was among the first to send men to the front, and during the war over one thousand men were forwarded.

Hon. Frank B. Fay, who was mayor at the time, was made chief of the United States Sanitary Commission, and spent nearly two years at the front.

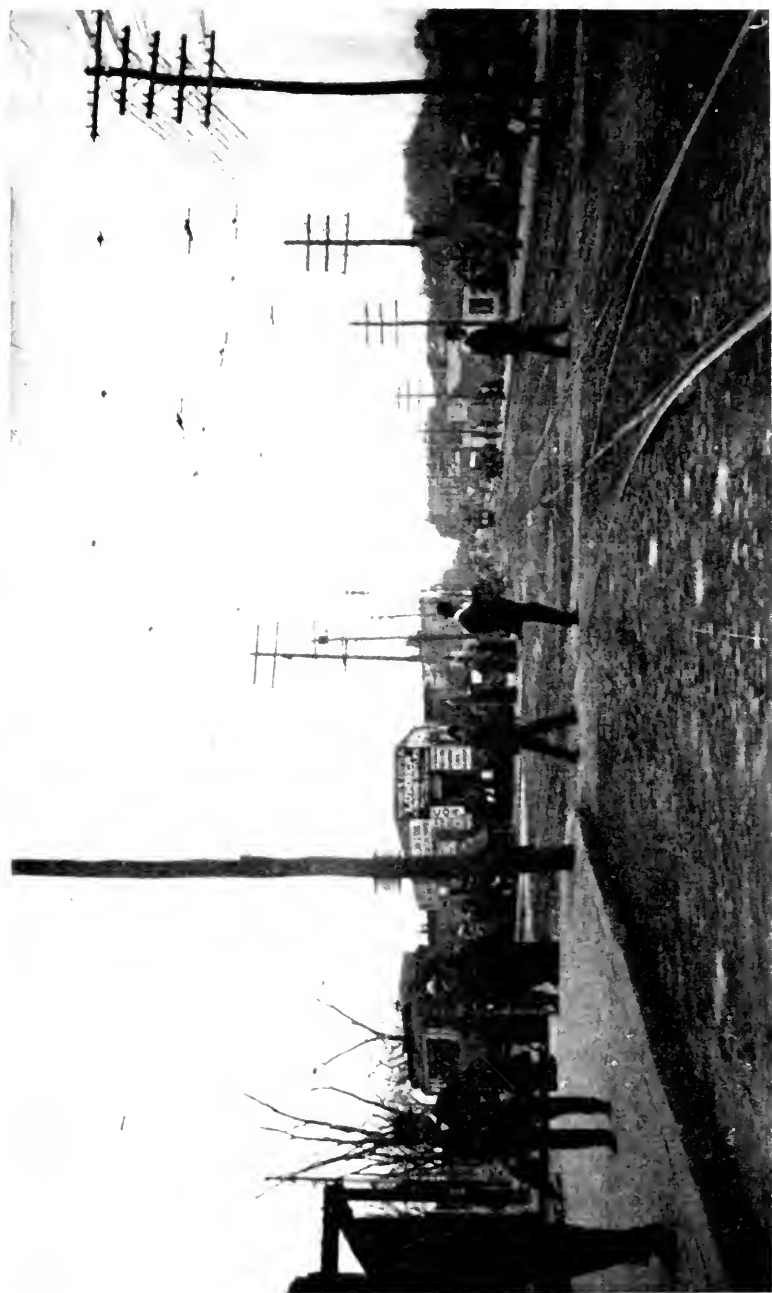
On June 5, 1868, tolls were abolished on Chelsea Bridge and the Salem Turnpike, and they were made free public highways.

Many famous people in all walks of life, both living and dead, came originally from or live at present in the city of Chelsea.

Among them are Benjamin P. Shillaber, better known in the literary world as Mrs. Partington; Lieutenant William B. Cushing, who became famous by his heroic work in blowing up the "Albe-

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

marle" during the Civil War; Mellen Chamberlain, L.L.D. and L.L.B., lawyer, judge, statesman, and historian; Hon. Frank B. Fay, chief of the United States Sanitary Commission during the Civil War; Hon. Rufus S. Frost, congressman and ex-president of the National Association of Woolen Manufacturers; John F. Low, inventor of the famous Low Art Tiles; Herman Atkins MacNeil, the sculptor; Rear Admiral John E. Pillsbury, United States Navy, assistant chief of the Bureau of Navigation; Captain J. B. Briggs, United States Navy; Miss Ellen M. Stone, the famous missionary; Congressman Ernest W. Roberts; Ex-Governor John L. Bates; David and Levi Slade, known by their famous spices; Henry Mitchell, the foremost engraver in this country; Fred L. Cutting, late insurance commissioner of Massachusetts; Colonel William Grantman of the Civil War; Mr. Frank Roy Fraprie, the author; Hendricks A. Hallet, the well-known artist; Jabez K. Montgomery, the ship



BROADWAY, A FEW WEEKS AFTER THE FIRE, LOOKING SOUTH FROM BELLINGHAM

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

builder; Samuel Orcutt, inventor of the first rapid printing-press ever patented in the United States; Hon. Eustis C. Fitz, trustee of Brown and Wellesley colleges and ex-president of the Boston Board of Trade; William E. McClintock, chairman of the Massachusetts State Highway Commission; Dr. William G. Wheeler, associated with Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes as examining physician for the Federal Government during the war; Mr. Joseph Lincoln, the author; Miss Laura Lee, the artist; Thomas and William Martin, manufacturers and exporters of elastic webbing; Miss Helen Fitz, president of the National Daughters of the American Revolution. There is practically no city of any size in the United States that does not contain former Chelsea people.

In Chelsea there are located many manufacturing concerns, famous not only locally but all over America, and in many cases throughout the civilized world. Among them are The Magee Furnace

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

Company; George D. Emery, the largest mahogany works in the United States, which maintains a line of steamers between Chelsea and South American ports; The Revere Rubber Company; the Low Art Tile Works; the D. & L. Slade Company, spices; Thomas Strahan & Company, whose wall paper is considered the finest made in America; T. Martin & Brothers, elastic fiber; Atwood & McManus, box manufacturers; and many large shoe factories.

There are three prominent hills in Chelsea, Mount Bellingham, already mentioned, which was burned over in the recent fire; Sagamore Hill in Prattville, where lived the tribe of Sagamore Indians, and where up to recent years it was a common thing for Indian graves and relics to be found, better known as Mount Washington, after the visit of General George Washington; and Powderhorn Hill, which tradition says was once sold for a horn of powder. The top of this hill, which was purchased by the

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

city in 1897, is set aside to be enjoyed forever as a public park. From the top of this hill during the Revolution signals were made to the people in Roxbury and Cambridge, giving the news of any movements of the British army in Boston. During the winter of 1775-6 three companies of Colonial troops had their quarters on the south side of this hill.

In addition to the park on Powderhorn Hill, Chelsea has Union Park in the heart of the city, adjoined by two smaller parks at the railroad station, Washington Park in Prattville, and two playgrounds, one in the Highland district, and the other in the extreme western end and adjoining the boulevard. The latter contains a quarter-mile cinder track, a football field, and two baseball diamonds. The Revere Beach Parkway passes through the northern end of Chelsea and adds twenty-one and one fifth acres of boulevard and parks to its open spaces. It connects the city directly with the beautiful Middlesex Fells Reservation of

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

eighteen hundred and eighty-five acres, and the wonderful five-mile Ocean Drive just completed from Winthrop to Revere and Lynn.

Chelsea is the easiest to reach of all the suburbs of Boston, being connected with it by the Winnisimmet Ferry, the Boston Elevated by the East Boston Tunnel, the Boston and Northern Electric line, and the Boston and Maine Railroad. From Chelsea Square to Scollay Square, in Boston, the running time is but thirteen minutes. Chelsea has the same postal service as Boston. It has the advantage of the Metropolitan water system and the Metropolitan sewerage system, both acknowledged unexcelled. Its schools are considered by the best colleges as of very high standing, and up to April 12, 1908, it had many miles of beautiful shaded streets and many natural advantages over other cities.

Why is it, then, that during the few years previous to the fire Chelsea had lost so many desirable citizens? Why

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

was it that in less than fifty years it had entirely lost its standing as the most aristocratic suburb of Boston, a place where people came to spend their summers, as they go to-day to Clifton, Magnolia, and Manchester, with a fashionable hotel on Powderhorn Hill, now the "Soldiers' Home," and beautiful country places leading down to the water along Marginal Street? How was it possible for a city of wealth, with a population of ten to fifteen thousand, to change in so short a time to a business and manufacturing community with a population of forty thousand, including ten thousand Hebrews?

This is what happened. In 1846 North Chelsea was set off, leaving an area of only two and one fourth square miles, including the United States Naval and Marine Hospital grounds and the United States Magazine Reservation. As the population increased business crowded the people back, until those who wished large estates migrated one by one to

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

Brookline, Newton, Malden, and other places. The Winnisimmet Ferry Company reduced its fare to three cents, and the crowded North End of Boston overflowed into Chelsea. Fire restrictions were placed on North End property in Boston and more Hebrews landed in Chelsea and set up their rag shops. It was gradual, — so gradual that old residents did not realize the number that were locating in the city. The water front properties were too valuable to lie idle, and large manufacturers secured them and located their factories there. With them naturally came a poorer class, and every two that came drove one old resident away. Young people married and moved away and the old people gradually died. This is why on April 12 this change had taken place, and Chelsea had become the most thickly populated city in the United States in proportion to its size, having forty thousand population in less than two square miles.

CHAPTER II

STATISTICS OF THE FIRE

Few people realize the size of the Chelsea fire from the newspaper accounts. In no cases were they exaggerated, while accounts in the New York and Western papers invariably underestimated the size of the burned district. On the authority of the "Fireman's Herald" of New York it was the third largest fire in point of area in the history of this country. The San Francisco fire burned over twenty-seven hundred acres, the Chicago fire twenty-one hundred and twenty-four acres, the Chelsea fire four hundred and ninety-two acres, and the Portland, Me., fire four hundred acres. The great Boston conflagration of 1872 covered only sixty-five acres.

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

The Chelsea fire swept the center of the city, covering a space a mile and a half long and three quarters of a mile wide. It destroyed practically all the business section, most of the municipal buildings, and twenty-eight hundred and twenty-two other buildings, making seventeen thousand four hundred and fifty people homeless.

It burned thirteen churches, eight schools, twenty-three oil tanks, the City Hall, the Frost Hospital, the Board of Health building, the Young Men's Christian Association, the United States Post-office, four newspaper plants, the Masonic Temple, three fine bank buildings, two fire stations, and over three thousand shade trees, and ruined miles of granite curbing. There were over seven hundred business firms and professional men burned out. They included fifty grocery stores, twenty-nine barber shops, twenty-eight doctors, twenty-eight tailors and dressmakers, twenty-one real estate offices, seventeen

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

insurance offices, thirteen apothecaries, and twelve bakers.

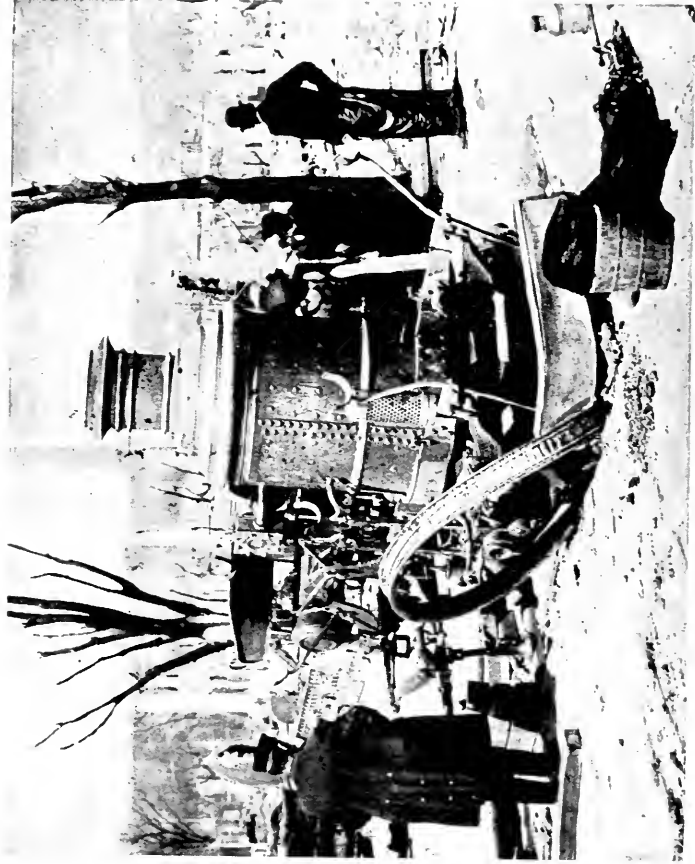
The fire spread so rapidly that three engines were caught in its path and destroyed, one from Lynn and two from Boston. A peculiar coincidence is that one of the Boston engines was "Big 15," bearing the same number as the engine which in 1834 came across the river and helped Chelsea put out its first fire. The insurance loss was \$8,846,879, according to the figures given in the speech of President Burchell at the annual convention of the underwriters, on May 14, 1908. The taxable value of the property destroyed is estimated as \$12,450,000 and other personal property brought the loss close to \$20,000,000.

The insurance loss was well divided, although the various companies located in Hartford, Conn., lost in the vicinity of \$1,000,000. The Royal of England was the heaviest single loser, with a loss roughly estimated at \$500,000. The Phoenix and Hartford Home offices came

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

next, with losses figured at \$250,000 each. The losses in addition to those mentioned above were as follows:—

Ætna, Hartford	\$165,000
American, New Jersey	60,000
American Central, St. Louis . . .	200,000
American Lloyds, New York . . .	4,000
Agricultural, New York	60,000
Alliance, London	35,000
Alliance, Pennsylvania	2,500
Albany, New York	7,500
Ben Franklin, Pennsylvania . . .	5,500
Boston	90,000
Buffalo-German, New York . . .	15,000
Cambridge Mutual	30,000
Caledonian, Scotland	50,000
Capital, New Hampshire	10,000
Camden, New Jersey	15,000
Citizens, Missouri	27,000
Colonial, New York	20,000
Concordia, Wisconsin	32,500
Connecticut	50,000
County, Pennsylvania	13,000
Delaware	35,000



COPYRIGHT, JUDICI CO., 1908

THE LYNN ENGINE DESTROYED BY THE FLAMES

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

Dixie, North Carolina	\$ 8,000
Dutchess, New York	6,000
Eastern, New York	4,000
Empire City, New York	5,000
Fire Association, Pennsylvania..	80,000
Firemen's, New Jersey	60,000
German-Alliance, New York . . .	30,000
Girard, Pennsylvania	12,000
Granite State, New Hampshire.	15,000
Hanover, New York	175,000
Hamburg Bremen, Germany . . .	40,000
Holyoke Mutual, Holyoke	150,000
India Mutual, Boston	2,500
Insurance Co. of North America, Pennsylvania	185,000
Jefferson, Pennsylvania	35,000
Law Union and Crown, England	1,000
Liverpool & London & Globe . . .	100,000
London & Lancashire Co.	94,700
London Assurance Corporation.	85,000
Mechanics, Pennsylvania	3,000
Mercantile Fire and Marine . . .	15,000
Merchants & Farmers Mutual . .	30,000
Middlesex Mutual, Concord . . .	60,000
Milwaukee Mechanics, Wisconsin	12,000

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

Nassau, New York.....	\$15,000
National, Connecticut.....	60,000
National, Allegheny	4,000
National, Pennsylvania.....	2,000
National Union, Pennsylvania..	83,000
New Brunswick, New Jersey...	10,000
New York Underwriters.....	25,000
Niagara, New York.....	115,000
North River, New York.....	65,000
North British, New York.....	10,000
Norwich Union, England.....	300,000
Old Colony, Boston.....	5,000
Orient, Connecticut.....	95,750
Palatine, London.....	95,000
Pennsylvania.....	96,000
Phenix, New York.....	200,000
Philadelphia Underwriters.....	35,000
Providence-Washington, Rhode Island.....	30,000
Queen, New York.....	95,000
Richmond, New York.....	1,600
Royal Exchange, England.....	35,000
Scottish Union and National...	50,000
Security, New York.....	20,000
Southern, Louisiana.....	5,000

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

St. Paul Fire and Marine, Min- nesota.....	\$12,000
Spring Garden, Pennsylvania...	50,000
State, Pennsylvania.....	7,000
Sun, London.....	125,000
Svea, Sweden.....	25,000
Union, Pennsylvania.....	25,000
Western, Pennsylvania.....	10,000

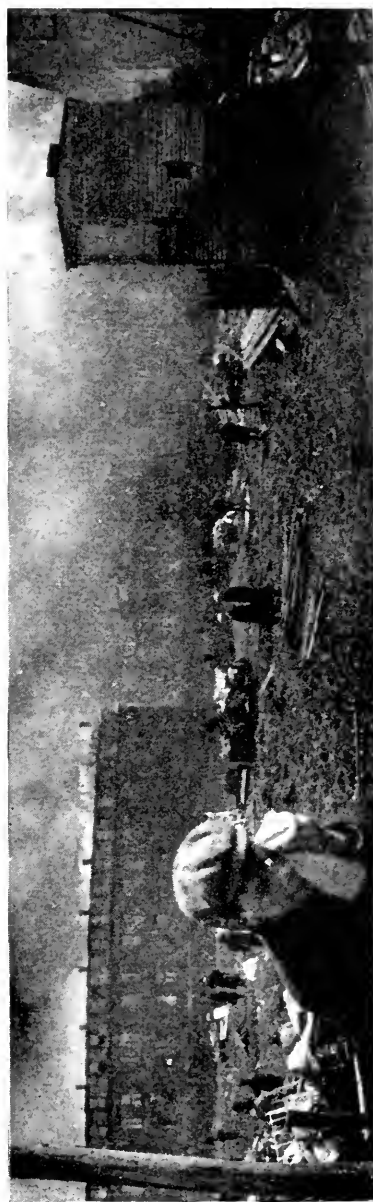
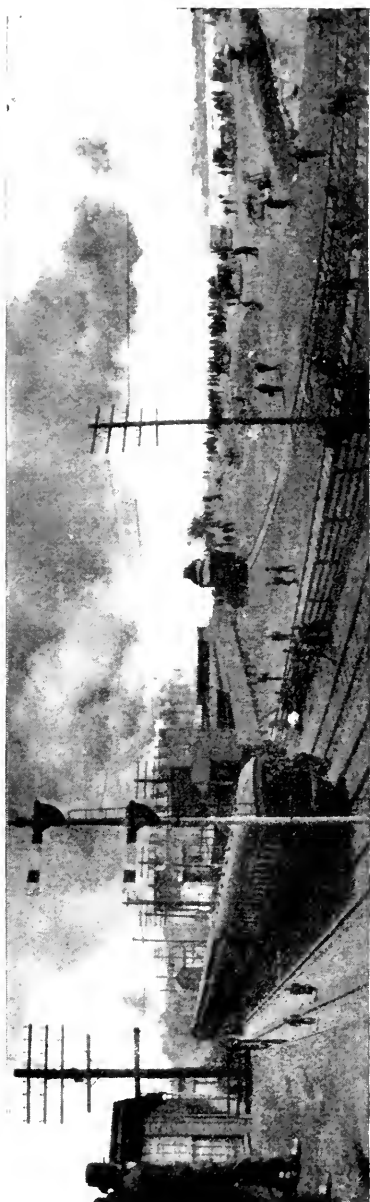
A relief fund was raised through Messrs. Lee, Higginson & Company of Boston, amounting at this writing to over \$350,000. The contributions to this fund were almost entirely from citizens of Massachusetts, as outside help was not asked for. They came from all classes of the community, and were sent in with the spontaneity and promptness with which the people of Massachusetts always respond to an appeal for merited aid.

The fire traveled more rapidly than any other of the large fires. It reached its most distant point inside of five hours, and inside of ten hours all of the build-

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

ings burned were totally destroyed. How many persons lost their lives in the fire will probably never be known. Eighteen bodies were recovered, and it is safe to estimate that as many more were entirely burned. Over three hundred injured were treated at the United States Naval, United States Marine, and the Massachusetts Soldiers' Home hospitals.

The Metropolitan Water Commission records show that forty million gallons of water were used in Chelsea on April 12, instead of an average consumption of 3,000,583, the cost of extinguishing the fire in water alone being \$1600.



START OF THE FIRE NEAR THE EVERETT LINE

CHAPTER III

THE START

The fire started a little before eleven on Sunday morning, April 12, 1908. Its origin will probably never be positively known. The most plausible theory, however, is that the roof of a building of the Boston Blacking Company, which is located just off Summer Street, close to the Everett line, in the extreme western part of the city, caught fire from a burning pile of rags on the dump to the windward. At all events, the flames were first seen just before eleven o'clock licking up this inflammable building with its contents of oil, and sending a shower of sparks blown by a forty-mile gale towards the heart of the city, and an alarm was at once sent in.

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

Immediately upon his arrival Fire Chief Spencer ordered a second alarm sounded as a matter of precaution, owing to the high wind. The firemen did good work and soon had the initial blaze well in check, as is shown by the fact that the remaining buildings of this company close by were saved.

Soon after the second alarm was sounded the firemen and spectators were astonished to see the three-story rag-shop of T. Lewitzky & Son, fully two blocks away, burst into flames. Apparatus to successfully fight its burning was not available. It was this fire that doomed Chelsea, for sparks from it started fires in several directions.

Opposite Lewitzky's factory was the tar paper factory of Chapin & Sawdin. The fierce heat from the tar paper drove the firemen back. A shed containing a large quantity of gasoline near by soon caught fire and blew up, just after a man, who was trying to save it, was ordered off by the police. This explosion set

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

fire to houses in the vicinity, which were principally of old-fashioned wooden construction, and allowed the fire to get such impetus that it spread out diagonally across the wind like a fan. When it reached Everett Avenue on the north and set fire to Justin S. Perkins' hay shed it looked as if nothing could save the Standard Oil Station, not over two hundred feet to the windward. "Cy" Coben was showing his nerve by sticking to his plant, but it was to the Malden firemen that Chelsea people are indebted for the saving of the northern section of the city. They arrived just in the nick of time and without thought of their personal safety, or of the awful result if the thousands of gallons of naphtha blew up, stuck by and saved the building.

If this plant had burned the exploding oil would have set fire to the great building of the Eastern Storage Company across the railroad track, and nothing could have prevented it making a clean sweep of

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

Caryville, increasing the burned area by at least one hundred acres.

As it was, the fire did not cross the tracks until an hour later, and then there was enough apparatus to extinguish it. After once getting hold of the little buildings on Maple Street, the flames almost simultaneously laid relentless hold of wooden buildings on all the surrounding streets. It raced down Summer, West Third, and Elm streets to Arlington Street, burning everything on Spruce Street and Everett Avenue.

Although it took but a short time for the fire to reach and burn the city stables, through the energy of City Engineer O'Brion all of the horses, carts, harnesses, tools, etc., were saved, which was fortunate, as it enabled the city to set large numbers of unemployed to work the next day cleaning the streets.

Before this time assistance had been asked of Boston, Everett, Revere, Lynn, Winthrop, Cambridge, Malden, Medford, and Melrose, and the engines soon began



RESPONDING TO THE FIRST ALARM

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

to arrive; but from the moment the fire crossed Arlington Street there was no formidable stand made against it, as it spread so rapidly under the impulse of the gale and stretched out over so long a front, backed by acres of lurid flames.

Not till it actually passed Arlington Street did people have any apprehension that it would not be stopped at this line, where the houses were of substantial brick construction. Ash Street, next to Arlington, was soon blazing and spreading the fire towards the railroad track in one direction, and Second Street in the other. The people on Walnut Street, next beyond, began moving out, and soon Union Park, near by, was filled with household goods. Women with babies in their arms stood huddled in the smoke, old men stood guard over the few things they had saved, and crying children hunted in vain for their parents. All the section about Walnut Street was inhabited by poor people with large fam-

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

ilies; Jews predominated, but all nations were represented. Many could not speak English, and panic seized all.

It seems as if every one tried first to save a mattress, which would become ignited before it was carried a block, and add to the volume of the flames. The yards and open spaces were strewn with old bedding and other inflammable material, which assisted in spreading the fire. Trunks and other heavy things were dropped from upper windows, regardless of those beneath. In some cases men and women fought as to what they would save, while their houses burned. One man loaded a team with old junk; some women cried and refused to look at the flames, others were hysterical and looked and laughed. Many Jewish women carried live hens in their arms. All fled towards the park, but this haven of refuge was only temporary, for soon the suffocating smoke drove them out, and a few minutes later the flames destroyed most of the property

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

laboriously removed from the houses. From here people dragging little ones or some article of furniture made for the railroad station, with the flames in close pursuit.

While the human beings were having such a hard time of it, dogs and cats were also having their sufferings. Looking out into Walnut Street one dog was seen, that had once been black, rushing madly about; its hide had been singed to a crisp, and when last seen it was headed right into the flames. On many streets dogs, cats, and hens were found after the fire, burned to death, and many horses also perished, as more would have, but for heroic work. In one instance Frank W. Wentworth, with some help, saved nineteen horses from a burning building by covering their eyes with blankets.

Huntington Smith of the Animal Rescue League estimates that as many as two thousand cats were burned to death. He says that these figures are conservative, and gives as the reason their

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

devotion to their homes; dogs, on the other hand, are more devoted to their masters, whom they followed, and for this reason very few perished.

From Walnut Street the fire leaped across Fifth and entered the windows of the new Jewish synagogue and literally lapped it up, and then hurled itself against the imposing brick walls of the Central Congregational Church at the corner of Fifth and Walnut streets. This church is one of the largest in the city, yet the flames took but a few moments to go from the basement up through the immense auditorium into the tower. While these buildings were burning the fire had destroyed on the other side of the city and at intermediate places the African Methodist Church, two Jewish synagogues, one on Walnut Street and one on Fourth Street, the Williams School, the Universalist Church and the Polish Church on Chestnut Street, and was headed straight for Broadway.

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

The Universalist Church caught first in the steeple, as did most of the churches. It burned very slowly, but finally the great golden cross fell with a crash into Fourth Street. After this the pastor, Rev. R. Perry Bush, went in by a back way and up into the pulpit to take a last look at the familiar scene which was so dear to him. In a lecture which he afterwards gave he described his feelings very dramatically, and said that he stood in the pulpit until the church was filled with smoke and the flames broke through the big stained glass window, then saying, "Good-by, dear old church," he went as he came.

The deacons had saved the communion service and had loaded a team with other church property, including valuable books and documents. On top of these they piled many pew cushions, — a fatal error. To quote Dr. Bush, "Do not ever try to save cushions under such conditions; if we hadn't tried to, we would have our books and papers to-day."

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

The cushions caught fire before they had been taken two blocks and were instrumental in setting fire to several wooden houses in the vicinity of Chestnut Street and Washington Avenue.

Chestnut Street was, until a few years ago, one of the best streets in the city, and parts of it were still considered very nice. Among the prominent people still living on the street was Dr. J. B. Fenwick, whose wife lost her life in the fire, together with her niece, Mrs. Walter C. Barnes, of New York, and Elvina Boyn, Mrs. Fenwick's maid. Mrs. Fenwick was prominent in Chelsea, being a member of the School Board and an active member of the Woman's Club.

It is not known how the women met their death, but it is believed they left the house by the rear door, as the street in front was thick with smoke and flying fire brands. They may have first turned up Cherry Street, a narrow street which ran past the rear of their house, and been stopped by the falling tower of the Polish



GRANITE BLOCK, DYNAMITED DURING THE FIRE

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

Church. This would have caused them to return towards Fourth Street. At about this time Granite Block on Broadway, directly back of which their bodies were found, was dynamited in an attempt to stop the conflagration, and the women probably took shelter in the porch of the building where their bodies were found, and were overcome by smoke.

Dr. George Fenwick, the son, has told friends that the last he saw of them was on the second floor of his home. As he was going to his room on the third floor Mrs. Barnes stopped him and handed him a wet towel to put over his face. The house had not yet caught fire, but the windows were cracked and broken by the heat from the fires across the street, and the building was full of smoke. He says he was not in his room over five minutes collecting his valuables. When he returned downstairs the women had left, and after making sure of this fact he made a dash down the street to the fire lines. Here he met his father, who had pre-

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

viously gone out with things of value and was not allowed to return. As the women left before young Dr. Fenwick, both men supposed them safe, and getting out their automobile, which was at a garage, helped others save property. The bodies were not found for four days.

On Chestnut Street, not far from the Fenwicks, lived Miss Ellen M. Stone, the missionary, who a few years before was captured by Macedonian brigands and held for a large ransom. People from all over this country contributed. Her home was filled with priceless souvenirs and a great many valuable books. Miss Stone was away from home over Sunday, and her servants had been given a holiday. Her brother, knowing that she was out of town, secured a horse and express wagon and drove to the house to save whatever might be possible. The doors, of course, were locked, and while he was battering one in the structure caught fire. When the door finally yielded the interior was all ablaze, and

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

Mr. Stone had to flee without saving a thing.

Captain Frederick M. Whiting of the Eleventh Company, Coast Artillery Corps, also lived on Chestnut Street. When his company was ordered out, he went with it. When the fire reached his home, his brother gathered some valuables into a trunk and removed them to the Armory for safe keeping, but later the Armory burned and they were lost.

Dr. J. M. Putnam was another resident of Chestnut Street, and was fortunate enough to save a few things with the aid of his son, Dr. Ralph Putnam, who came over from Winchester.

CHAPTER IV

BEYOND CONTROL

Every one seemed to feel sure that the fire would be stopped at Broadway, as the buildings on this street were substantial structures built of stone and brick, and no one even then judged rightly the havoc which must ensue before the fury would abate.

The local militia (the Fifth Company, Coast Artillery Corps) had been summoned, and the militiamen had donned their service uniforms and overcoats, leaving in their lockers, in security as they supposed, their civilian clothes, their watches, and pocket money. Hardly had they been assigned to their posts before Broadway was threatened, and soon their new \$100,000 Armory

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

became a volcano of flame as the element of destruction spread on.

It first reached Broadway between Third and Fourth streets. Here a heavy battery of engines was assembled to prevent its crossing, but the efforts of man and the floods of water were of no avail; the fire was beyond human control.

Up to now the flames had rushed through the foreign tenement district, but when it passed Chestnut Street it entered the business center. Before the fire had even reached Chestnut and Fifth streets awnings in Bassett Square, two and three blocks away, caught fire. The fire reached Bellingham Station about two o'clock. The sight from here, looking down Broadway and Hawthorne Street, was beyond description. The fire fairly lay across the streets in a cyclonic whirl of flame.

All at once out of Hawthorne Street shot an engine, as if coming out of a cannon. The driver was almost doubled

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

up and the horses were going at a twenty clip; where they came from or how they ever got out of that furnace alive is a mystery.

The new six story brick Young Men's Christian Association building caught first in the upper story and then all over; hose was burned at this point as fast as it was laid. An electric car of the Boston and Northern Railroad which had been stopped on Broadway, just below Bellingham, by the shutting off of the power, was pushed up the street and over the bridge to safety by fully a hundred men.

Beyond Broadway lay blocks of substantial residences. The flames were gnawing up the structures on Hawthorne Street, and the Unitarian Church and Newspaper Row on Fourth Street were quickly burned. The fury of the spreading flames was indescribable. There would be no sign of fire in a building, when all at once it would seem to fairly burst into flames and simply melt away. One large double house, which

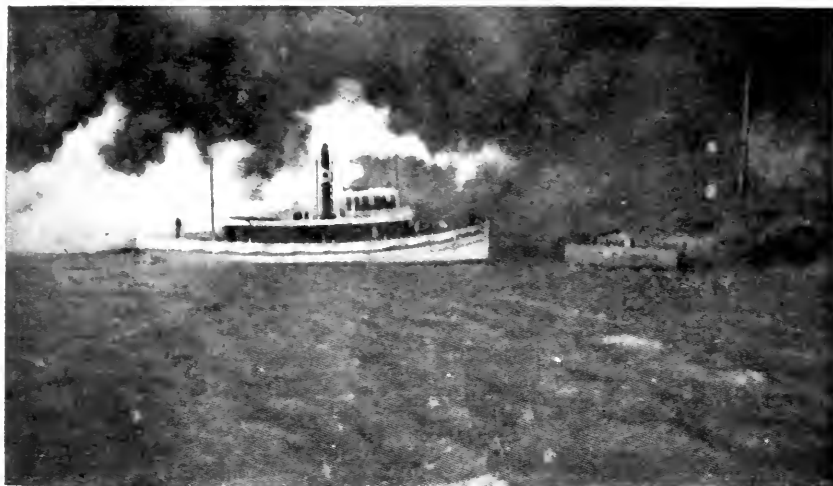
THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

was timed, took just eight minutes to burn from the moment the flames were first seen until the building was a mass of ruins in the cellar.

All this time people were fleeing from the fire, many moving things to what they considered a place of safety, only to be obliged to move them again and eventually have them burned. Many people who lived east of Broadway went out to see the fire before it had crossed that thoroughfare, only to return and find their homes either on fire or already destroyed. No one seemed to realize how fast the fire was traveling, except those who fought it. If people had heeded the first warnings of the soldiers and the police, many could have saved something, but they waited, not wishing to appear timid, and afraid of ridicule if they started to move too soon. In the face of the great battle they had to fight, firemen and police officers could not give heed to the frantic appeals of women to save furniture.

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

Many people, when they realized that they had lost everything, threw themselves in the street and cried aloud in their suffering. It was no uncommon sight to see white-faced women walking aimlessly along the street, heedless of where they were going, yet carrying a frying pan or tin dipper. One man rushed into his house, at the risk of his own life, to save the family cat. After carrying it a block the cat scratched itself free and dashed back into its burning home. Hundreds of people saved canary birds, and one woman came along the street with a statue, which had no head or feet, under one arm, and a bird cage with a cat in it under the other. When asked why she was saving the broken statue she looked at it in a dazed sort of a way and threw it away in disgust, and then wonderingly inquired how her bird had got out of the cage, never realizing that the cat had eaten it. One woman, remembering that she had left a pocket-book containing \$17 on her



A BOSTON FIRE BOAT FIGHTING THE FIRE



COPYRIGHT, JUDGE CO., 1908

BROWN STONE HOUSES FARED NO BETTER THAN WOODEN TENEMENTS

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

dining-room table, rushed back into her home and grabbed up what she thought was her pocket-book, but when she had gotten several blocks away she found that in her excitement she had taken a piece of cut glass instead, and it was then too late to return. Another woman was ordered out of her house by a militiaman, but would not go until she had first filled her teakettle with water. Afterward she couldn't explain why herself. Many people went temporarily insane. On the Washington Avenue bridge one man stood for hours making appeals for volunteers to fight the fire; his coat was off and his hair was mussed. People paid no heed to his frantic gestures, but he probably imagined he was saving the city. Another man committed suicide by shooting himself near Union Park. Some lost the power of speech, but under the circumstances the number of minds affected was small.

One woman lugged a great marble clock under one arm and a dog under

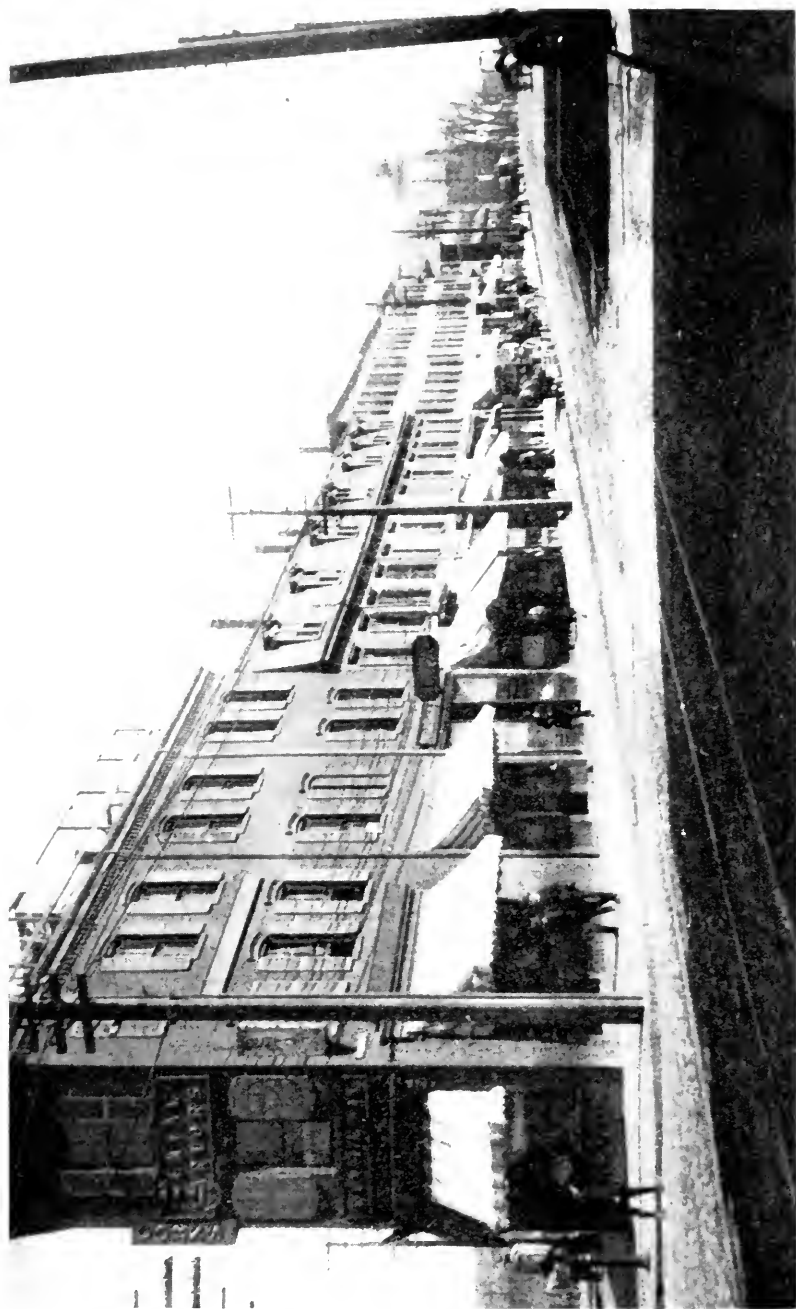
THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

the other for three quarters of a mile. The dog couldn't lay down for three days, she had held him so tight. Many people saved things of little value and left things impossible to replace. One man carried twenty-two pieces of cut glass loose and unpacked, tied up in a sheet and thrown over his shoulder, for over a mile, through all the excitement, and not one piece was smashed.

A fireman entered Freeman's drug store while it was burning and taking the reflection of himself in the long mirror at the end of the store for another fireman walked through the glass.

Two men trying to save an upright piano gave it up when the cloth in the back caught fire. One opened the lid and played "There'll be a hot time in the old town to-night," while the buildings all about him burned.

Fate was especially kind to Eli C. Bliss, who lived in what is called Chestnut Street Pocket, — a short blind end of Chestnut Street beyond Washington Ave-



JUNCTION OF WASHINGTON AVENUE AND BROADWAY BEFORE THE FIRE

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

nue, ending in a steep embankment at the railroad tracks. The fire approached so rapidly that escape was impossible, except by way of the embankment. Just as Mr. Bliss was leaving his attractive home a passing freight train stopped directly at the end of the street, and the train crew rushed up the bank and announced that they had two empty box cars. Working like demons nearly everything in the house of any value, including a grand piano, a lot of old mahogany furniture, books, and paintings, was piled into the cars, until they were nearly full. The train then pulled out just as the house commenced to burn, none too soon, as the cars were smoking themselves. Mr. Bliss later located his furniture in Lynn, after it had landed in Portland and been shipped back.

The railroad tracks which passed through this part of the city have always been considered an eyesore and have been the cause of much regret to many residents. There is not a resident of

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

Chelsea to-day, however, who is not glad of their presence, as they were the means of saving the northern part of the city, the best residential section. The fire burned only a single building north of the tracks.

Not far from the Bliss estate lived the Millers. Miss Edith Miller was to be married in a few days, but so hurriedly were they obliged to leave that not even her wedding dress was saved, and all her beautiful presents and trousseau were lost.

When the fire started up Mount Bellingham, hurried calls were made for ambulances to take the patients out of the Frost Hospital. There were twenty-five patients suffering from different injuries and diseases in the building, and the doctors and nurses showed great heroism. But for their running into the street and hailing all the automobiles and teams in the vicinity, and making them carry the patients to the other three hospitals in the city, none would have

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

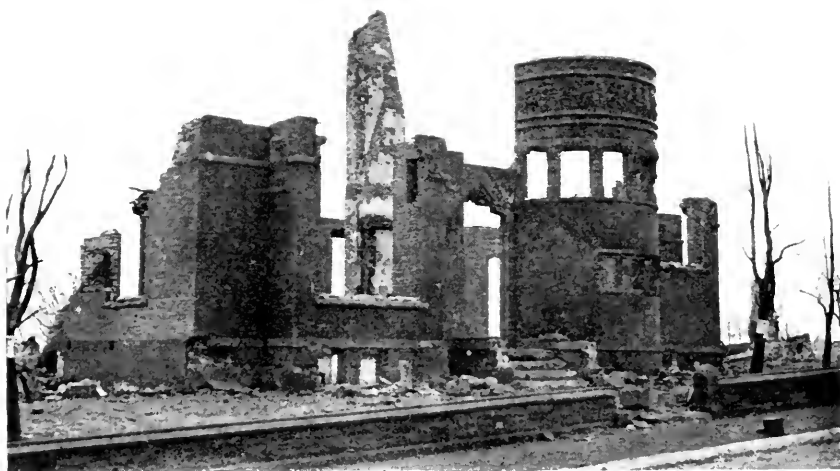
been saved. As it was, before the last patient was out the roof was blazing. Meanwhile the children at the day nursery had been taken care of and were nicely housed, thanks to Mr. Jesse Knowlton, at his home on Powderhorn Hill.

The City Hall did not last long after the flames took their first mouthful. The city treasurer, Thomas B. Frost, early recognized the peril and removed all the city funds, while the books were locked in the safes by the city clerk, Charles H. Reed, who stayed in the building so long, saving property, that he was obliged to make his escape through a second-story window. The beautiful Baptist Church across the street melted away before the flames in a few minutes.

Many people made a frightful mistake by thinking they were safe in fleeing to the Garden Cemetery. Those who did were surrounded on all sides by the flames, and for hours they crouched behind tombs, fighting the burning embers and gasping for breath.

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

The flames fairly shot up Bellingham Street, on which were many fine homes. Chief among them, on the very top of the hill, was the beautiful estate of Ex-Mayor Thomas Strahan, filled with valuable paintings, tapestries, and art treasures, collected from all parts of the world. The house was of brick and stone with a slate roof and plenty of land about it, and it seemed as if it could be saved. The view from the tower of the Strahan house can never be forgotten. As far as one could see, a seething mass of flame, like a tidal wave, was rolling up the hill. So fast had the fire approached that the Lynn engine, stationed halfway up Bellingham Street, was unable to get away. The firemen did not abandon it until their faces were burned and their hair singed. It was beyond human force to withstand the terrific heat and suffocating smoke, and it was with difficulty, when they finally abandoned it, that they were able to save their lives, as the fire completely surrounded them.



RESIDENCE OF EX-MAYOR THOMAS STRAHAN
BEFORE AND AFTER THE FIRE

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

At this time the fire had already passed the Strahan house in the valley to the left, and the Highland School, halfway up the hill on that side, was in flames. Great pieces of burning wood came into the tower and the wind was so strong that it was hard to stand against it.

So fascinating was the sight that it was not until the Strahan barn, only a few feet away, burst into flames, as if it was made of celluloid, that the writer descended from the tower to help the Strahans to escape; but they, like too many others, had waited too long, in hopes their home would be saved. With the help of the servants we carried out several blankets filled with clothing, a chest of silver and some jewelry, leaving thousands of dollars' worth of beautiful things to be devoured by the flames.

We fled down the hill in the direction of Orient Heights. Hundreds were going the same way; poor and rich were on equal terms. The wind blew with such force that women were blown into fences

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

and trees or lost their balance and fell. Great pieces of furniture went bounding end over end down the hill, blown by the wind. Horses were running away, and the scene was one of terrifying confusion. Escape was possible only by enduring the hostile breath of the flames, running, tripping over abandoned furniture in the blinding, sickening smoke, towards the marshes to the northeast, where, although safe from the flames, the refugees suffered untold agony from the hail-storm of stones and showers of blazing embers that fell upon them, burning holes in their clothes and starting grass fires in every direction.

One old lady's celluloid back comb caught fire and her white hair was burned down to the scalp in back before the flames could be smothered. The many horses set loose on the marsh also endangered lives. The wails of hundreds of frantic parents vainly searching for their children added to the excitement. One mother fell in a dead faint when her two-

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

year-old child, whom she had given up as lost, was brought to her.

In the crowd racing down Mount Bellingham were many men, who had assumed the duties of clearing houses of inmates, lending a hand to all the weak and faltering, until they themselves were obliged to flee for their lives. Perhaps the most touching spectacle was the old people, forgotten by their relatives. In many cases these old women had to be carried bodily to safety, and it speaks well for the city that there were men doing this work amid the confusion and at the risk of their own lives. Men and boys, crazed by the thought of losing their homes, clambered to the roofs and tried to save them with puny buckets of water, replying to frantic warnings to escape while there was time, only with curses, until in many cases they had to be driven by blows to a place of safety.

The flames came down the hill like a forest fire. They were upon the people before they realized it, and when they

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

attacked at the front door there was but one thing to do, and that was to make a rush for the rear door.

In the meanwhile, on the south side of the city the fire had burned from building to building. There was no stopping it, although the firemen worked desperately. It kept on towards the water front until it reached the buildings of the Tidewater Oil Company. Here five oil tanks caught fire and exploded and set fire to the docks along the water front, and then three barges loaded with oil a little farther on caught fire and spread to the Ellis yard, where more oil was stored. The fire boats came as near as they dared and poured streams of water on the flames, but it was like trying to check a volcanic eruption.

The two bridges to East Boston next fell and cut off this means of escape, and in this way a Boston engine was burned and a boy lost his life. Near the bridges were many fine yachts, that of Mr. Seaver being worth \$50,000. This, and

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

many other vessels, were burnt. One broke away from its moorings and drifted to the East Boston shore, setting fire to the Standard Oil Works. This was about four o'clock, but from the time the fire began to spread into the east side of Chelsea, East Boston was in peril from the shower of sparks and burning brands which the high wind swept over its roofs. More than half the residents packed their belongings and were ready to move at a moment's notice. Despite the desperate efforts of the many engines the flames spread to a one-story brick building, containing three hundred barrels of oil, and soon four other buildings of the plant were burning. Next the great oil tanks went up, the flames shooting several hundred feet into the air and sending skyward great clouds of flame and thick, black smoke. This swept down the harbor, across the bay, and out to sea, continuing to do so for two days and two nights. Reports from Scituate, Cohasset, and other places showed that showers

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

of embers dropped from the clouds, and in places good-sized pieces of burnt shingles were picked up. Grass fires were started in Nantasket and Winthrop. The glare from the fire in the evening was seen from Portland, Me. The natives at first believed it to be York Beach, it was so bright.

Meanwhile about fifty houses in East Boston had their roofs badly damaged. These fires, however, mark the extreme limit of the flames in this direction and were soon extinguished.

Although much credit is due the firemen, they were greatly helped by the fact that the velocity of the wind began to decrease about the time the oil works caught fire.

While this contest was being waged, another army of firemen was struggling on the north. About two o'clock the Armory burned; and when it was all ablaze, a large quantity of ammunition which was stored in the building exploded with a tremendous report, while tons of



COPYRIGHT, JUDGE CO., 1908

BOSTON AND ALBANY RAILROAD BRIDGE, WITH WRECKED EAST BOSTON BRIDGE
AND BURNING OIL TANKS



THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

burning wood were shot across the street and into the adjoining buildings.

The Public Library directly across the street, a gift to the city from the Hon. Eustis C. Fitz, containing over eighty thousand volumes and many historical records and relics, caught and burned without an attempt being made to save it or its contents.

One of the best illustrations of the heat of the fire to those familiar with the burning of books, is the fact that after the fire not one scrap of paper was found. Granite will often crumble and iron melt before a book will be totally burned up.

The Convent and Parochial School also were among the buildings which caught from the Armory, and the twenty-eight sisters made a hasty departure. Next went Saint Rose Catholic Church, remodeled at an expense of \$50,000 a short time before. Beyond this was the railroad track, and here a determined stand was made. Thousands of people lined the opposite side of the track, and

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

water was played on most of the buildings. Soon after the Catholic Church commenced to burn the Melrose fire department crossed the track with a line of hose and climbed the steep bank just in the rear of the church, which was like a flaming furnace. Hardly had they got the water on when the roof fell. The heat was so terrific that the firemen who held the hose were obliged to drop flat on their faces with their hands under their bodies. Even then they were more or less burned about the neck and ears. One fireman, who was nearest the building, groaned in agony, "Give me hell in preference to this."

On Washington Avenue there stand to-day three wooden houses. They are the only buildings, with the exception of part of Cobb's stable on Broadway, which were saved on that side of the Boston and Maine tracks, and that they are still standing is due to two things:—

First, to the fact that Union Park and the park at the station are in the rear



THE FITZ PUBLIC LIBRARY BEFORE AND AFTER THE FIRE

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

and the fire had to burn around them and then up into the wind.

Second, to Dr. Thomas Green and Robert Hamilton, who, after the others had deserted their homes, remained and helped the firemen.

On the south of the city firemen were stubbornly fighting to save Winnisimmet Square. The flames upon spreading along Everett Avenue had made away with the great Chelsea Trust Company building on the corner of Everett Avenue and Broadway. They then reached out to the other corner and caught on every floor of the building. Across the street was the Post-office and this was doomed, but at the Park Hotel the flames were checked.

CHAPTER V

UNDER CONTROL

By six o'clock the firemen were keeping the fire confined to the buildings already burned on the south. On the north they had succeeded in preventing its crossing the railroad tracks, and on the east and west it had burned itself out, while in East Boston the firemen seemed to be holding their own. It was not until one o'clock in the morning, however, that Commissioner Parker announced that all danger of its further spreading had passed.

Late in the afternoon the United States marines from the Navy Yard, who had been ordered to Chelsea by Admiral Swift, arrived in Chelsea Square. The detail consisted of one hundred and ten

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

men under command of Captain C. S. Hill, Lieutenants Moses, Williams, and Judson, with rifles and ball cartridges, and they at once cleared the square and the surrounding streets, and assisted the firemen in many ways.

The good work done by this corps and their ability to carry out instructions is well illustrated by a story which went the rounds at the Puritan Club a few days later, at the expense of Harry Frothingham, one of the members.

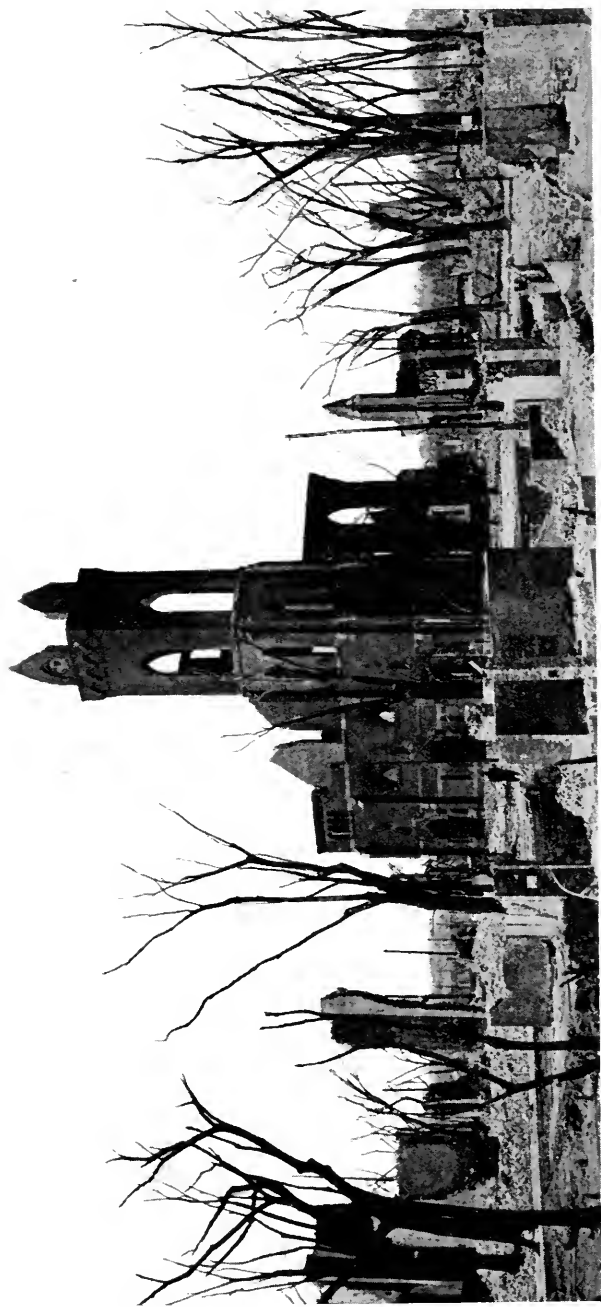
It seems that the former Boston fire commissioner, "Ben" Wells, and Mr. Frothingham went over to Chelsea, arriving shortly after the marines had cleared the square. Mr. Wells' fire badge admitted him through the lines, and although Mr. Frothingham had no badge, he got through at the same time. Reporters who recognized Mr. Wells joined him, anxious to get an interview from a man of so much experience in fires. A corporal of the guard who saw the crowd broke in with the remark, "Have you

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

fellows all got badges?" Mr. Frothingham had none and the corporal ordered him out. The reporters could not stand for this, and one excitedly exclaimed, "Look here, what are you doing? That is Ex-Alderman Frothingham, and he is with Ex-Fire Commissioner Wells." "I don't care who he is or who he's with; if he hasn't got a badge, out he goes," replied the corporal, and turning to one of his men he said, "Put that man out and keep him out. See!" and Mr. Frothingham went.



WHERE THE FIRE WAS STOPPED ON SIXTH STREET



RUINS OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH AND CITY HALL

CHAPTER VI

NIGHT AMONG THE RUINS

As night approached the problem of protecting the seventeen thousand refugees and their goods confronted those in authority, and it was realized that it was too great for the local artillery company and the detail from the Marine Corps to handle. The State was called upon for more military assistance and eight companies of the Coast Artillery, four of the Fifth Infantry, six of the Eighth Infantry, and four of the First Corps of Cadets were rushed to the scene, making twelve hundred troops on duty before morning. At ten thirty the city was declared under martial law, and no one was allowed in or out until morning. Seven hundred tents and seven hundred

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

and fifty blankets were ordered down from the barracks at South Framingham, and a special train with Battalion Adjutant Kendall in charge brought them through in record time, arriving shortly after midnight. All trains on the Boston and Maine, and all electric cars on the Boston and Northern and the Boston Elevated had been stopped. The Chelsea Ferry was commanded to cease its trips and a cordon of soldiers was thrown entirely about the city. At the principal approaches it is estimated that one hundred thousand curious people were turned back. The telephone exchange had been burned and of course the service was useless. Early in the day the electric power plant was shut down to prevent death by live wires, and the streets outside the burned district would have been dark, but for the glow which was reflected from the sky and the moon, which dimly beamed through the pall of smoke. At the Court House, where scores of injured were taken in ambulances, doc-

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

tors and nurses, under charge of Dr. J. A. Johnson, worked as best they could by the light of lanterns.

In the court room were homeless women huddled in gray despairing heaps on the hard benches. At the back of the room rows of rubber-coated men leaned back on their hard benches, their inflamed eyes completely hidden by squares of soft absorbent cotton, soaked with ointments, which showed up with startling effect against their blackened faces. In the center of the room, under the sickly ray of a red lantern, stood the big court table piled high with thick square loaves of bread, big four-gallon cans of milk, and fifty-gallon cans of coffee. At either end of this table were well-dressed women, their faces pale and haggard, one cutting slices of bread and others pouring coffee. Men ate in huge gulps and drank from thick white mugs and quart dippers, then rushed out to the fire, taking handfuls of food to those who could not leave their engines. The

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

difference between the room, with its misery and confusion, and the orderly hall of justice for which it had served up to that day, was as marked a contrast as could readily be imagined.

All night long ambulances dashed from the ruins to the United States Naval Hospital, where, under the direction of Medical Inspector H. E. Ames of the United States Navy the majority of the injured were treated, and to the United States Marine and Soldiers' Home hospitals, and but for the unflagging efforts of the hospital sergeants, doctors, and nurses many more lives would have been lost.

One man, when picked up by the ambulance with his face and arms terribly burned, was nearly dead. Attempts were made to learn his name in case he should die, but in reply to the attendant's question he only moaned, "My God! My God!" Another man was picked up with both legs broken, still another had a terrible gash in his fore-



RUINS OF THE CENTRAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

head caused by a falling wall, another man fell from a roof and broke two ribs, and so it went. In all, three hundred injured persons were treated.

Mayor Beck, who had lost his home and his newspaper plant, was everywhere, and it was nearly morning when he lay down on a policeman's cot at the station for a few hours' sleep. Many of the policemen who were on duty lost their homes, but stuck to their posts, although they did not know where their wives and families were.

About midnight a gang of men started to clear the street railway tracks on Broadway and Everett Avenue, which are the outlets from Boston to many of the northern suburbs. In places they were piled several feet high with bricks, granite blocks, and other debris. The rails themselves had been twisted and bent into all conceivable shapes by the heat, and the trolley wires and poles were down. In spite of the several miles of track thus destroyed the company ran

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

cars through the city the second day after the fire. Through the orders of Henry Mitchell, chairman of the High School Committee, the doors of the High School on Crescent Avenue had been thrown open early in the day to hundreds of women and children who were wandering aimlessly about the streets and parks. The corridors were now filled to overflowing with sobbing women, little children, and a few old men. Husbands and brothers were out hunting for relatives, directing people to shelter or helping in some other way. Few men slept during that night, and hundreds had their eyes so badly burned and inflamed by the smoke and heat that they were in great pain.

The High School could hold only a limited number, and it was pitiful to see women and children huddled together for warmth in little groups along the railroad tracks, in the parks, or in side streets. Thousands flocked to Powderhorn Hill and spent the night sobbing

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

out some story of woe to any bystander who might seem at all interested.

During the evening a citizens' meeting was held in the High School, which was attended by many prominent men. A Relief Committee was formed to care for the destitute and needy. Mr. Wm. E. McClintock, chairman of the State Highway Commission, was chosen chairman; City Treasurer Thomas B. Frost, treasurer, and Benjamin P. Nichols, secretary. After sending out the following letter of appeal the meeting was adjourned until eight o'clock in the morning.

"Chelsea, April 12, 1908.

"We have been visited by a most terrible catastrophe. One half the area of our city has been swept by fire. Fifteen thousand people are homeless.

"Twelve million dollars' worth of property has been destroyed. Our business section is almost wholly wiped out. We are in sore need. We have not lost our

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

courage, but are applying ourselves with all our ability to the task before us.

“But that task is stupendous, and we ask assistance of all who are beneficently inclined. He who gives quickly gives double. Subscriptions may be sent to City Treasurer Thomas B. Frost.”

(Signed) “JOHN E. BECK,
 “Mayor of Chelsea.

 “WILLIAM E. McCLINTOCK,
 “Chairman of Relief Committee.”

Later it was decided to accept no aid outside the State of Massachusetts.



COPYRIGHT, JUDGE CO., 1908

A VAST EXPANSE OF RUINS

CHAPTER VII

DAY DAWNS UPON THE RUINS

As the sky grew light and the morning mist cleared away, it disclosed a vast expanse of smoking ruins. The night had passed, and what a night! filled with vivid, awful memories of the dead and injured, the homeless and destitute. The great blackened tract over which the fire had swept, which only the day before had been covered with dwellings, stores, and public buildings, was deserted, save for the soldiers, and here and there little groups of firemen, tired and worn out, but still working. As it grew lighter more people appeared. On the playground to the west soldiers were pitching tents for the homeless. As far as one could see lay nothing but a barren

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

waste, with here and there the ragged walls of a church or school standing out against the sky, like the ruins of some old castle.

On the sides of Bellingham Hill, with the exception of the walls of the Highland School, nothing remained. Far off in the distance towards the west stood the ruins of the big Frank B. Fay School, named for Chelsea's war mayor.

Broadway had been partly cleared during the night and was passable. The other streets, however, were piled with debris. The telephone, electric light, and street railway wires were in a tangled mass all over the city. In spite of this, by noon the telephone people had six lines operating for official business. A line of hose had been kept playing on the vaults of the County Savings Bank all night, and about ten o'clock they were opened. A great cloud of smoke poured out, but the contents were intact, giving confidence to the other bank officials that their securities were safe, which



THE HIGHLAND SCHOOL BEFORE AND AFTER THE FIRE

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

later proved true. To the southeast the huge oil tanks still belched forth clouds of smoke and flame, showing that here the fight was not yet over.

The granite curbs that edged the streets were crumbled into little piles of sand and gravel, and in the entire area there was not enough inflammable material to kindle a kitchen fire. So intense and searching had been the heat that the telegraph poles in places were burned two feet into the ground. Nowhere were there any ashes; they had all gone with the gale. It was the most complete sweep that could be imagined; hardly a brick wall stood, save those of public buildings. The sight was like nothing so much as the skeleton of Pompeii, with the great smoke clouds of the oil tanks to represent Vesuvius in eruption. The cellars were often filled with glowing coals, with here and there a darting flame and drifts of black smoke.

The horror of the devastation thrilled the tingling nerves, and it all seemed like

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

a fearful dream until a sharp, "Halt! Who's there?" from a guard, brought back the reality of the thing.

With the dawn the people of Chelsea got their first glimpse of the burnt area, and began to realize what the fire demon had accomplished. The work of over one hundred years had been destroyed in a few hours. In every direction were the skeletons of what had been beautiful shade trees that it had taken God fifty years to grow, and which "Hell's breath" had withered and killed in a few minutes.

With the daylight people took courage; there was no weeping, and the excited crowds of the day before were no more. Men who had lost everything smiled and extended sympathy to others. The one thing that impressed the observer was the matter-of-fact way in which all took their losses. They kept their troubles to themselves and got to work helping others.



SHURTLEFF STREET BEFORE AND AFTER THE FIRE

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIREMEN

No set of men ever worked harder than the firemen. They put up as gallant a fight as was ever fought on a battlefield. Old men, who had spent their lives fighting the flames, admitted that it was the hottest fire that they had ever seen. No amount of apparatus could have stopped it after the second fire had got started. The way the gale swept the flames along was beyond comprehension.

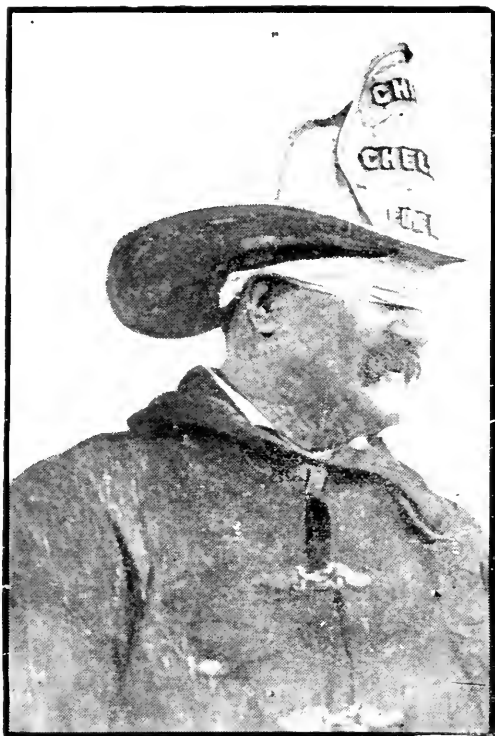
The Chelsea firemen had been kept constantly on the jump for two years previous to the fire in the performance of their duties, and when this fire started they, like other citizens, thought it would be extinguished, as many others had been

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

in that district, without much loss, but the second fire changed everything.

At the meeting of the Fire Chiefs' Club of Massachusetts, held at the Hotel Cecil, Boston, on April 15, the sentiment expressed was that no fire-fighter in the country could have done any better than Chief Spencer, with such odds against him, and as a token of their sympathy and esteem they elected him their president. They agreed, however, that the fire was not handled systematically, but that this was through no fault of Chief Spencer. If he had had a corps of deputies, there would have been some one in authority to meet the out-of-town firemen when they arrived. As it was, these companies had to rely on their own judgment and get to work without making a report.

And speaking of Chief Spencer, a good story is told at his expense. During the fire a bundle of woman's wearing apparel was left at the Central Fire Station for safety. Shortly after Chief Spencer entered the building and threw his hat



COURTESY OF UTICA SATURDAY GLOBE

CHIEF SPENCER DURING THE FIRE

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

down upon the bundle, and when he left, hurriedly grabbed up a different hat. Later in the day the Central Fire Station burned, and one of the firemen, assuming that the chief had packed up his uniform in the bundle from the fact that his hat was on top of it, with much difficulty carried the bundle to a place of safety. The next day the man proudly went to his chief and notified him that he had saved his uniform. The chief was greatly surprised, but naturally pleased, and thanked him cordially, at which the blushing fireman replied he was glad to have been of service to him. The chief sent for the things, and notified his wife that he had sent his uniform home and asked her to open the bundle and hang it up. But it was up to the chief to explain, when his wife met him in the front hall with indescribable articles of female wearing apparel and demanded to know if they were a part of his uniform.

Many firemen were injured or burned during the day; all suffered terribly with

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

their eyes, and men like Dr. W. S. Walkley (and there were a lot of them), who went about among the firemen bathing their eyes and putting cold cream on their burns, were a godsend and did much good.

A great many Chelsea firemen lost their homes, but even when it became apparent that they were to be destroyed, they did not waver, but stuck to their duty. They would enter a burning building with their hose and stay there in an attempt to save it until their clothes were on fire, enduring suffocating smoke and intense heat, and many times did not leave their positions until their lines commenced to burn. In many cases they stuck to their posts, playing streams of water on burning oil tanks and buildings containing explosives, when at any moment they were liable to be blown into eternity. Their courage and their loyalty to their superior officers will always be a lesson to follow to those who were among them. No criticisms have

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

been made of their work; it has been universally acknowledged that no human agency could have won out against such odds on that day.

The following letter, sent by Mayor Hibbard of Boston to Fire Commissioner Parker, would apply to the firemen from any of the many cities that gave aid to Chelsea. Each department was responsible for checking the fire and saving some portion of the city.

“April 15, 1908.

“Samuel D. Parker, Esq.,

“Fire Commissioner:

“My Dear Mr. Parker, — I congratulate you and the officers and men of the Fire Department on behalf of the city for the magnificent work done in the Chelsea and East Boston fires on Sunday last.

“The latter district owes its preservation to the courage and ability of the Fire Department of the city of Boston.

“Only those familiar with the condi-

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

tions can appreciate how magnificently the work was handled.

“Let me add my personal thanks and congratulations to you and your men.

“Yours very truly,

“G. A. HIBBARD, Mayor.”

CHAPTER IX

THE MILITIA

Troops arrived all night on April 12, coming from different parts of the State. They were quartered in the electric cars stalled in Chelsea Square, in Grand Army Hall, in stores, and in fact, about any place where they happened to be. It mattered little, as very few men got a chance to sleep. Headquarters were established at the Police Station in the Court House, Colonel Charles P. Nutter taking command, being relieved later by Colonel E. Leroy Sweetser. A very heavy sentry detail was swung out during the night, forming a complete cordon around the burned area and the houses on the edge, which were only partly destroyed. Each man had ten rounds of ball cartridges issued him with instruc-

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

tions to use them if his challenge was unheeded. Orders had been issued to pass no one in or out of the burned area during the night, but early in the morning orders were given to admit those with passes.

The following is the first general order issued in Chelsea: —

“Headquarters Provisional Battalion,
Chelsea, Mass, April 13, 1908.

“General Orders No. 1:

“1. The headquarters of this Battalion will be at police headquarters until further orders.

“2. Officers will be held strictly accountable for the safety of all private property within their districts, and will allow no one to disturb or carry away any private property from the ruins without a permit signed by Herbert W. Stebbins, or upon orders from the proper authorities.

“3. Enlisted men will not leave the street to trespass upon private property,



COPYRIGHT, JUDGE CO., 1908

THE EIGHTH COMPANY, COAST ARTILLERY, KEEPING BACK THE CROWD IN WINNISIMMET SQUARE

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

nor will they touch any private property, except to save it from loss, and then turn it over at once to their company commanders. Sentinels will treat all persons courteously in enforcing orders.

“4. All officers and men will cooperate and assist the members of the city government, the police department, and authorized committees in their work.

“5. Lieutenant Williams, assistant surgeon, Eighth Infantry, will make an inspection of the sanitary conditions within the city limits and report to these headquarters.

“6. Captain Whitney, Fifth Infantry, will inspect and report all walls that are unsafe within the burnt district.

“By order of Colonel Sweetser,

“HARRY F. BROWN,

“First Lieutenant and Battalion Adjutant,

“Acting Adjutant.”

There were three forms of passes issued, a blue one, which admitted to the lines,

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

which was taken up; a white one, which permitted the bearer to search among the ruins; and a special one, allowing the holder to open a safe, which read as follows:—

“Permit to Enter upon Property.

Good for this day only

——— has permission to enter upon
——— Street, previously occupied by
him, to examine premises, open safe and
remove property belonging to him, be-
tween the hours of 8 A.M. and 5 P.M.,——
April —, 1908.

“GASPAR G. SHANNON,

“Chief of Police.

“Use of Explosives Forbidden.”

Many who had fled from the city when their homes were burned were unable to get back without much trouble, having first to satisfy guards on Chelsea Bridge and the highways leading to Everett and Revere that they had a right to be in the city. After they got through these outposts they could not get into



COPYRIGHT, JUDGE CO. - 1908

TROOP A, FIRST SQUADRON OF CAVALRY

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

the burned area without a pass from Colonel Nutter, who was in command. During the early hours hundreds of residents on the farther side of the fire desired to go to Boston and other places to work, but could not do so on account of the cordon of soldiers, until arrangements were made to gather the people together in large groups and march them through.

The police willingly gave in to the soldiers, and in no instance did a clash occur. Every one was stopped at the picket line and only firemen, policemen, and people with passes got by. Many people were indignant when stopped, and commenced to abuse the soldiers, but as a rule the reply, "Those are the orders, sir," brought a smile and, "Well, I'm not blaming you."

An incident of the military patrol of the ruins was an encounter between the sentries and a gang of one hundred and fifty Italian laborers, who failed to comprehend the fact that they could not pass the guard

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

lines without permits, although they had been sent to work on the ruins. The gang tried to rush the lines and a hand-to-hand tussle followed, in which some of the workmen were roughly handled.

Another incident occurred on Broadway. A soldier ordered a chauffeur to stop his machine. The man replied in an insulting manner and continued on his way. He was placed under arrest and turned over to the civil authorities. Judge Bossom sentenced him to six months in the House of Correction, stating that his conduct was reprehensible, and that at such a time every one should obey orders of those in charge and do everything in his power to assist.

There is no question that the militia did its duty; the men worked hard, with practically no sleep and little food for days. They not only did guard duty, but helped in the relief work, and volunteered for many other duties.

Soldiers were detailed to search among

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

the ruins for bodies; and when one was found, a guard was placed over it and was obliged to stay there, sometimes for hours, until the coroner could be found. They kept people away from the threatening walls and guarded what property was left. They acted as messengers and stood for six to eight hours at a stretch on guard. The rations consisted of whatever could be got together, always coffee and bread, with sometimes canned meats or beans, which was very meager compared to the regulation field ration.

It was unjust and contemptible for a certain Boston paper to come out with big headlines to the effect that the soldiers were looting, and the fact that this paper made an editorial apology the next day does not excuse the city editor for allowing it to get in. In the first place the soldiers had no time for looting, and in the second there was nothing of value left to steal. The following article taken from "Practical

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

Politics" expresses the writer's feelings very well: —

"Whoever framed up the story that there was looting by the soldiers placed to guard people's property as well as the lives of the community, did the soldier boys a great wrong, for the story went broadcast all over the country, to the effect that they had been guilty of the most heinous offense, either in times of war or peace, that of looting the dead and the helpless people. The stories did a great injustice to the marines and jackies from the Navy Yard, as well as to the State forces, and that it was not true was very promptly shown by the governor and the adjutant general, both of whom nailed the story before it had traveled much. The harm was done when the press associations, accepting it as a bonafide piece of news, sent it to all parts of the world. One of the odd things about the accusation is that two members of the Massachusetts Legislature, Senator Tilton S. Bell and Repre-

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

representative J. B. Ferber, were among the soldiers on guard at Chelsea during the critical times, and they did not see or hear of any looting."

Editorials like the following appeared in many papers through the State:--

"We have no hesitation in saying that the charge of looting made against the militia on duty in Chelsea is wholly unwarranted, and that even were some individual member of our military force guilty of such unsoldierly conduct, his offense is no excuse for wholesale accusations against the body. The troops, national and State, on duty in the burnt district have been doing splendid work; everybody who has watched their course has spoken in the highest terms of their care, courtesy, vigilance, and soldierly bearing; and their services have been of great value to the afflicted community in preserving peace and property and facilitating the humanitarian work the occasion demanded.

"We have every confidence in the dis-

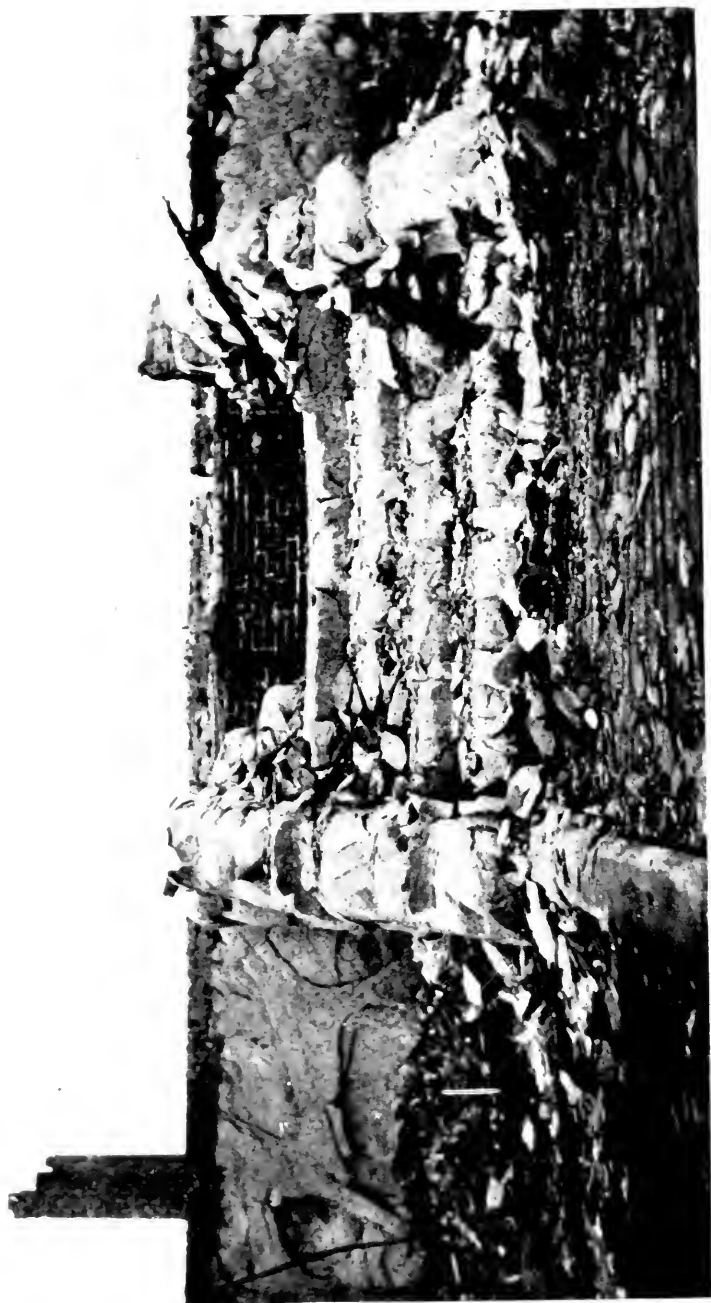
THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

cipline, efficiency, integrity, and fidelity to duty of our troops; and if any individual militiaman has deflected from the standards of conduct expected and enforced, we may confidently count on his punishment for his offense and his expulsion from the body. Accusations against our troops are in bad taste and should not be indulged in unless backed by the best evidence."

Upon the withdrawal of the State troops from Chelsea, Mayor Beck sent the following letter to Adjutant General Brigham:—

"William M. Brigham, Adjutant General:

"Dear Sir, — As mayor of the city of Chelsea, I desire to tender this official recognition of the prompt, efficient, and valuable services rendered by the militia under your command, detailed to preserve order and protect life and property in Chelsea during and since the great conflagration.



GRANITE CRUMBLLED TO GRAVEL UNDER THE HEAT

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

“Order was maintained by your officers and troops under the most trying circumstances, and no just criticism of their conduct, other than that which is creditable, can exist.

“I feel especially grateful to both Colonel Charles P. Nutter and Colonel E. Leroy Sweetser for their harmonious cooperation with the civil authorities during this period.

“My grateful acknowledgment of obligation is also due to the rank and file of each company, including the Fifth Company, C. A. C., a large number of which, although their entire possessions were lost and their families rendered homeless by the fire, responded faithfully to the high call of military duty without regard to their personal interests.

“Respectfully yours,

“JOHN E. BECK, Mayor.”

CHAPTER X

EXPRESSIONS OF SYMPATHY

Before the fire was extinguished messages offering aid and sympathy began to pour in. One of the first was a telegraphic despatch from President Roosevelt as follows:—

“Mayor John E. Beck, Chelsea, Mass.

“In company with all our people, I am inexpressibly shocked at the tragedy that has befallen Chelsea. Is there anything the national government can do, in connection with the Navy Yard or with either the military or naval establishments at Boston, which will be of service?

“THEODORE ROOSEVELT.”

to which Mayor Beck by the light of the

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

fire wrote the following despatch in reply:—

“President Roosevelt,
Washington, D. C.:

“Your telegram of sympathy and tender of service is deeply appreciated by our people. The marines from the Navy Yard have done yeoman service for us. In the hour of this sad affliction the kind words of our sister cities and States have steeled our arm. We will arise from the ashes and build a new city that will show to the world the courage and fortitude of the citizens of Chelsea. Respectfully,

“JOHN E. BECK, Mayor.”

The Massachusetts senators sent the following:—

“John E. Beck, Mayor, Chelsea, Mass.

“We have learned with deep regret of the great misfortune which has befallen Chelsea. If there is anything we can do to aid you, please let us know at once.

(Signed) “HENRY CABOT LODGE.

“WINTHROP MURRAY CRANE.”

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

Congressman Roberts of Chelsea telegraphed: "Do you want me to introduce a resolution in Congress for blankets?"

Acting Governor Draper went to Chelsea as soon as he learned of the catastrophe, and offered the aid and sympathy of the State.

A cable was received at the State House from the Irish National Party as follows:—

"Dublin, Ireland, April 13, 1908.

"To Governor, State House,
Boston, Mass.

"Irish National Party deeply sympathize with Boston in tragic calamity.

"(Signed) REDMOND."

to which the governor replied:—

"April 14, 1908.

"Hon. John E. Redmond, M. P.,
Dublin, Ireland.

"Thanks for expression of sympathy. While great loss of property and much

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

suffering, our people have situation well in hand

“(Signed) DRAPER, Acting Governor.”

The following despatch was sent to Mayor Beck immediately after a hurried meeting of the citizens of Brookline had been called:—

“In behalf of the town of Brookline, I send to you our deepest sympathy for the calamity which has come to your city.

“I authorize you to draw on the town of Brookline now for the sum of \$1000, and further steps will be taken to aid you financially. I trust you will call upon me at the Brookline Town Hall if there is any other assistance which our citizens can render you at the present moment. We stand ready to help you in whatever way we can.

“Respectfully yours,

“WILLIAM CRAIG,

“Chairman Board of Selectmen.”

General Booth of the Salvation Army cabled from London as follows:—

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

“Mayor, Chelsea: I mourn with you in this calamity. Sympathize with sufferers and pray that God may be with them and comfort them.

“WILLIAM BOOTH.”

Hundreds of similar messages were received from all parts of this country and abroad, and the two telegraph stations, hurriedly established, one on Charlestown Bridge, and the other at the Boston and Maine railroad station, were kept busy. Hundreds of telegrams and cables were received which could not be delivered as the people to whom they had been addressed had been burned out and in many cases had left the city.



THE COURT HOUSE, USED AS CITY HALL AFTER THE FIRE

CHAPTER XI

THE RELIEF WORK

The work of relief started almost before the flames of the first section destroyed had died away. Acting Governor Draper, who had arrived in Chelsea about the middle of the afternoon, at once realized the immediate need of assistance, turned about and had his chauffeur take him speedily to his office at the State House. Here he got into communication with the City Hall, and a meeting was arranged at the mayor's office. Mayor Hibbard, who was at his summer home in Provincetown, arrived about six o'clock. The first move was to get hospital service to the city and all available doctors, nurses, and ambulances were sent to Chelsea.

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

Messengers were despatched to bring many prominent citizens to a citizens' meeting, and among the first to arrive was Major Henry L. Higginson of the firm of Lee, Higginson & Company, who at once offered all immediate financial assistance necessary. Provisions for the refugees were the first necessity, and the authorities in Boston and Chelsea combined to secure them. Bakers, provision dealers, and restaurant keepers readily volunteered to furnish them, and what is more important, had them ready and delivered in Chelsea by midnight.

Meanwhile, the residents of Chelsea had not been idle. While the fire was at its height, J. Travis Roberts went to the junction of County Road and the Boulevard, and stopped every motor car that came along, courteously requesting the drivers to loan their cars to the city. In a very short time about fifty cars had been secured, and their help was of great value.

Dr. Charles N. Cutler organized a res-

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

cue corps with motor cars to take the needy people to the First Congregational Church on County Road, where Mrs. Henry A. Tenney had charge, and was assisted by Mr. Herbert Slade, Miss Florence H. Mitchell, and many others. H. P. McManus of the firm of Atwood & McManus summoned all his teamsters and got out ten double wagons, which he ordered into the burning district and put at the disposal of the fleeing population. In this way a great many families saved most of their belongings. He then secured ten bushels of sandwiches to feed the fire fighters. All about the edge of the fire luncheons were to be had for the asking. Mr. R. H. Grant made and served many gallons of coffee. Dr. Charles Reeds went through the burning district near his home, handing out food to the soldiers and firemen. Every namable kind of relief sprang into action, and the organized Relief Committee was relieved of a large proportion of its duty. The National, American, and Adams

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

Express companies put their teams at the disposal of the Relief Committee and offered to transport all relief supplies free.

Mr. Albert Tenney, manager of the Suburban Electric Company of Malden, placed five automobiles at the disposal of the committee, and ran one himself for several days.

The Chelsea Relief Committee, which was selected early in the evening, set up headquarters in the High School building just outside the fire lines. The first step was to open an information bureau, where the homeless were directed to churches and other places open to receive them, and where the missing could report and the lost get in touch with their friends.

The next morning there were organized a bureau of general information, a committee for medical relief, and a housing and employment bureau. The insurance companies also established a bureau of information. In the basement a bakery and lunch counter was

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

started, and great four-horse loads of food were delivered at one door and distributed at another.

The Scenic Temple on Second Street, at the other end of the city, was opened as a dispensary distributing station, in charge of George H. Willie and George H. Dunham. Other places of refuge were the Salvation Army Barracks in Chelsea Square, Saint Luke's Parsonage, the Cary Avenue Methodist Church, the First Congregational Church, the Soldiers' Home, and scores of other places where small numbers could be cared for.

William E. McClintock, chairman of the Relief Committee, opened his headquarters at his residence opposite the High School. The Young Men's Christian Association opened headquarters in the Review Club next door. Voting booths were erected on the club's tennis court for the use of the city officials. Crowds gathered on the streets about these buildings, and it took a large detail of soldiers to keep things straightened

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

out. In the High School, lines of young women were busy making card catalogues of new addresses and telling the inquirers where their friends and relatives were to be found. In the rooms off the corridors, committees inquired into each case, and issued cards for food and clothing. At every entrance stood sentries to keep out the merely curious, and outside other soldiers kept the deserving crowd in a line, which for days reached far down the street and turned the corner. On the third floor were piled articles of clothing. At first there was naturally a great confusion, but soon the committee got things down to a system.

The Massachusetts Chelsea Relief Committee issued the following bulletin for information of fire sufferers and others: —

Executive Headquarters — Chamber of Commerce, Boston, Mass.; telephone, Fort Hill 1834. Edmund Billings, executive secretary, James J. Storrow, chairman.



BY WM. J. MCCLINTOCK

THE BREAD LINE

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

Treasurers — Lee, Higginson & Company, 44 State Street, Boston, Mass.

Chelsea Relief Committee — High School Building, Chelsea.

Insurance Information — High School Building, Chelsea.

Receiving Station — For supplies, except food, Keany Building, 251 Causeway Street, Boston; telephone, Richmond 777.

Registration for Lodgings — Municipal Building, 427 Blossom Street, Boston; telephone, Haymarket 427.

Registration for Volunteer Workers — Room 31, Charity Building, Chardon Street, Boston; telephone, Haymarket 847.

Automobiles — Owners who can loan their machines for use, telephone Room 31, Charity Building; telephone, Haymarket 847.

All supplies (except food) should be sent to the Keany Square Building, 251 Causeway Street, which is in charge of

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

Miss Katherine D. Loring of the Red Cross Society.

From this point they are distributed on proper requisition to the various points where the refugees are located.

There is a great necessity for under-clothing, men's, women's and children's, babies' blankets, blankets, sheets, and pillow cases.

They cannot use anything that is dirty or torn, nor clothing trimmed with lace, or evening dresses.

Offers of food, milk, and other perishable supplies should be made to Mr. Billings, the executive secretary. Chamber of Commerce Building; telephone, Fort Hill 1834.

All persons who had any fire insurance and who had a fire loss should apply to the Insurance Information Committee, High School Building, Chelsea, Room 11.

The fire insurance companies have established this committee to furnish free information and advice to any per-

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

son who was insured and suffered any fire loss, whether their policies were burned or not.

There is a great need for automobiles to be used in moving the sufferers and in distributing nurses, etc., both in Chelsea and Boston.

Owners who are willing to loan their cars for such use should telephone to Room 31, Charity Building, Boston, Haymarket 847.

The following relief stations were established by the committee: —

First District — High School Building, Crescent Avenue.

Second District — Lincoln Hall, Second Street.

Third District — First Congregational Church, County Road.

Fourth District — 880 Broadway.

Fifth District — Spencer Avenue School Building.

These were the only ones provided for by the committee in Chelsea, although

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

special interests looked out for their own people. Among them were the following stations:—

Central Congregational Church—Washington Avenue opposite Heard Street.

Christian Science Church — Rear of 2 County Road.

St. Luke's Episcopal Church — Parish house, Washington Avenue, corner Spruce Street.

All denominations — Cary Avenue Methodist Church.

Catholic — Old parochial residence, Crescent Avenue near Broadway.

Labor Unions — 195 Broadway.

Elks — Corner Williams Street and Broadway.

Eagles — Broadway, opposite Court House.

Foresters and Knights of Columbus — 66 Williams Street.

Red Men — Towne's store, Broadway Square near Second Street.

Hebrew Information Bureau — 129 Winnisimmet Street.

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

N. E. O. P. — 371 Spruce Street.

Masonic Bodies — 136 Broadway.

District Nurses — Lincoln Hall, Second Street.

Knights of Columbus — Old Salvation Army building, Park Street.

Christian Scientists — General distribution of relief supplies, carriage house rear of Wilson estate, Carter Street off Washington Avenue.

The regular relief stations in Chelsea in one day distributed the following supplies: —

FOOD

Milk, gallons.....	400
Coffee, gallons.....	600
Canned meat, cases.....	75
Canned soup, cases.....	100
Canned salmon, cases.....	50
Dry codfish, large boxes.....	50
Coffee, pounds.....	100
Condensed milk, cans.....	1,200
Granulated sugar, pounds.....	500
Eggs, dozens.....	1,000

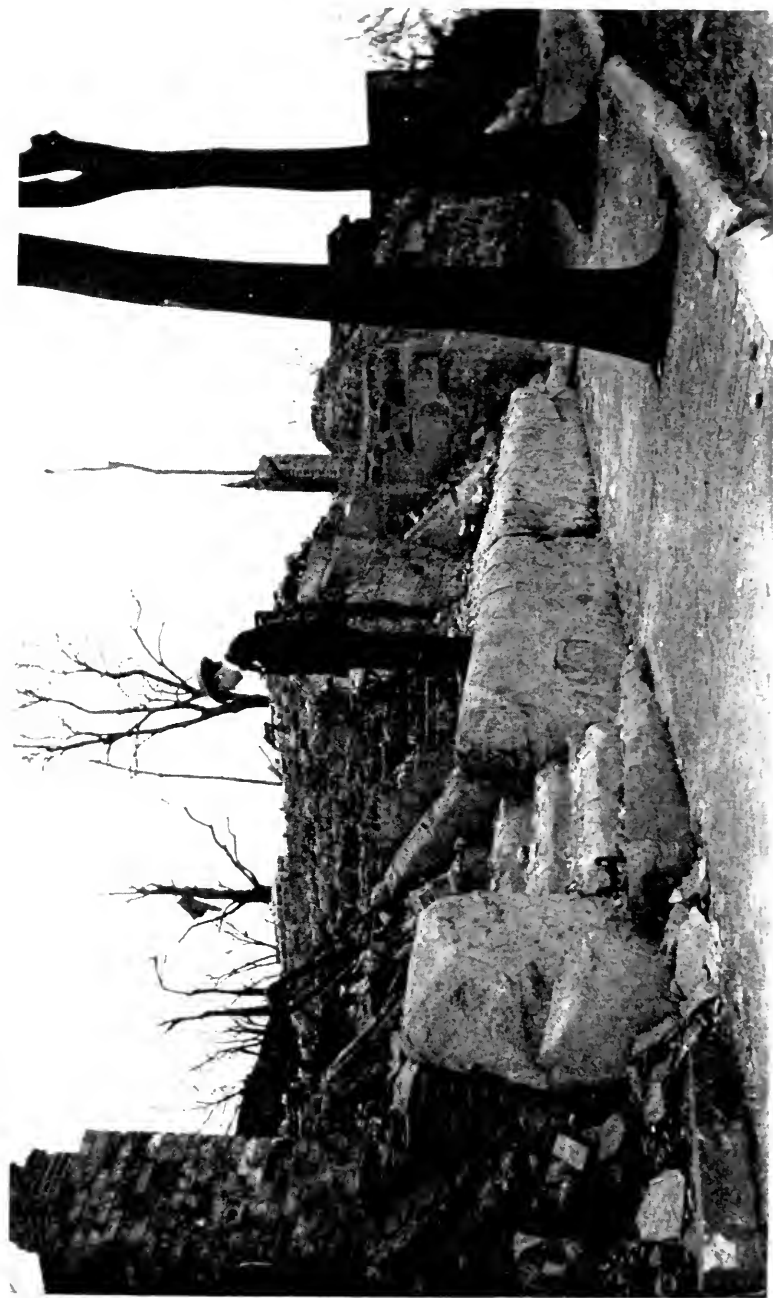
THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

CLOTHING

Boys' suits.....	500
Children's underwear.....	500
Men's underwear.....	500
Men's trousers.....	250
Men's shoes, cases.....	25
Women's shoes, cases.....	25
Women's underwear, suits.....	100
Hosiery, men and women, pairs..	1,500
Blankets.....	1,000
Mattresses.....	500
Pillows.....	500

Among the Chelsea women who worked untiringly for days at the relief stations were: Mrs. Grace D. Bancroft, Miss Mary Keen, Miss Alice Dorkhann, Mrs. Charles Bourne, Mrs. Boyd Bartlett, Mrs. Andrew T. Hunnewell, Miss Ethel F. Bourne, Mrs. C. Willis Gould, Miss Edith Bush, Miss Margaret H. Ames (Naval Hospital), Miss Agnes Peck, Mrs. F. L. Avery, Miss Abbie Tarrell, Mrs. E. Frank Guild.

It was found after the second day that



EFFECT OF FIRE ON GRANITE WALLS AND CURBING

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

many applicants who crowded into the relief stations were simply taking bundles of clothing and supplies across to Boston and selling them for what they would bring. It was learned that some of these people did not live in Chelsea at all, being impostors from various quarters, who were fraudulently obtaining places in the relief line, and it was found absolutely necessary to have some kind of personal identification. The committee, therefore, adopted the following identification card:—

SAVE TIME FOR YOURSELF

and help the committee by having the attached card of identification filled out and signed by your pastor, doctor, or some business or professional man known to the committee. With the identification card you will be served without delay. Without the identification card you will go to Room — and be specially examined.

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

Below is a blank, as follows:—

I am personally acquainted with _____ of No. — _____ Street, and know that he is worthy of aid. I recommend that he be given —, etc.

An average of twelve thousand people a day were fed at the various relief stations for weeks. H. P. Hood & Son sent wagon loads of fine milk free of charge. Henry Siegel wired his Boston manager to establish immediately a tent for the free distribution of soup, sandwiches, and coffee, and the instructions were carried out. A. Shuman sent over one thousand dollars' worth of wearing apparel.

A relief station was established at the Keany Square Building in Boston and was under the charge of Miss Katherine Loring, who was assisted by Miss Eleanor Sears, Miss Higginson, Miss Hunnewell, Miss Olive Ames, Mrs. Arthur D. Cook, Miss Dorothy Forbes, and other young society leaders of Boston. A detachment of ten signal corps men were

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

placed here under command of Lieutenant R. E. Blecher to guard the place and help sort goods sent in.

Mr. Herbert Norton, chairman of the Chelsea License Commission, immediately canceled all licenses which had been issued in Chelsea and Police Commissioner O'Meara of Boston issued the following order the night of the fire:—

“City of Boston, Police Department.

“April 12, 1908.

“Under the authority conferred upon me by sec. 19, chap. 291, acts of 1906, I hereby suspend and make inoperative until further notice all licenses to sell intoxicating liquors in police division 7 (East Boston) and in that part of police division 15 (Charlestown) lying between Mystic and Charles rivers and the harbor on the north and east and southwest and a line on the west drawn through Everett Street, extended to Mystic River, Concord Street, Monument Square, Pleasant and Devens streets, Rutherford Ave-

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

nue and Arrow Street, extended to the water, including both sides of said streets, square, and avenue.

“Sec. 19 provides further that:—

““Any licensee who personally or by his servants or agents sells, furnishes, or delivers any intoxicating liquors during such suspension shall be punished by a fine of \$200 for said offense, and his license shall become forfeited.’

“This suspension will be revoked as soon as it becomes evident that public safety and order in the parts of the city specified no longer require it.

“(Signed) STEPHEN O’MEARA,

“Police Commissioner of the City of Boston.”

Nearly two hundred refugees were sent to the South Armory, and housed in the quarters of Battery A, Field Artillery. Armorer George Thorpe worked untiringly for their comfort. The Mellin’s Food Company sent to Chelsea twenty-

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

five cases of malted milk, the National Biscuit Company two hundred boxes of Uneeda biscuits. The Horace Memorial Church on Webster Avenue took care of two hundred people. The McGee Furnace Company, the Revere Rubber Company, the Forbes Lithograph Company, and many other big manufacturing plants, established relief stations for their own employees.

The rector of Saint Rose Catholic Church issued the following notice:—

“Chelsea, April 15, 1908.

“The parish is fully covered by insurance and has no need of assistance, and has a glorious future before it. We have no need to think of that now. Provision will be made for masses and everything of that kind.

“What we are wholly intent on now is the relief of the poor. We have three bureaus of supplies open day and night, and all may come for relief. All who are in the city, whether of our faith or not,

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

will be gladly welcomed. We will supply them with food and clothing, and will engage and furnish tenements in Boston and elsewhere. We beg Chelsea people who have left the city, and are temporarily with friends, but who cannot stay long where they are, to come and let us provide for them.

“Our depots are at the Spencer Avenue Catholic school, at the old parochial residence, Broadway and Crescent Avenue, and at the corner of Williams and Broadway.

“THOMAS J. CUSICK, Rector.”

The three banks which were destroyed secured temporary quarters in a building near the Court House, and inside of twenty-four hours had their securities out of the ruins, and were able to pay depositors who needed money.

The morning after the fire the Chelsea Post-office opened temporary quarters in a pool room on Park Street. All mail that was in the burned Post-office was

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

saved by heroic work of the department, and three deliveries were made during the day following the fire, although the majority of people to whom mail was addressed could not be found.

Congressman Roberts at once introduced a bill in the House of Representatives appropriating \$125,000 to provide for a new building.

Furniture companies and other business concerns took immediate measures to relieve their patrons. Instalment houses announced that their customers having unsettled accounts need not worry about payment, as all goods sold were insured.

Major Walter E. Lombard made an appeal to the military organizations throughout the State for funds to relieve the members of the Fifth Company, Coast Artillery Corps, whose Armory had been destroyed, and who had lost, not only their clothes, but in thirty-five cases their homes. Over \$1500 was contributed to this fund.

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

The labor unions of Boston were prompt in coming to the aid of their members who suffered in the fire.

Hundreds of loaves of bread came over in the wagons of Ferguson, Fox, and other bakers, while Cobb, Bates & Yerxa and S. S. Pierce & Company had great four-horse wagons early on the scene, loaded with provisions of all sorts. Supplies piled in from all sides. The Keany Square Relief Station looked like a great warehouse. In one day the following gifts were acknowledged by this station: —

A carload of clothing from the Phillips Brooks House, a carload of suits from the Brookline relief committee, a box of clothing from Mrs. Kennison, gifts from the First Presbyterian Church on Columbus Avenue, clothing from boys of Phillips School, gifts from Shepard, Norwell & Company, gifts from C. F. Hovey & Company, an express load of packages from the city of Somerville, gifts from the King's Daughters of Cambridge, twelve



THE SHURTLEFF SCHOOL BEFORE AND AFTER THE FIRE

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

barrels of gifts from the Salem Thought and Work Club, gifts from W. S. Butler, fifteen mattresses from the New York Mattress Company, three boxes of goods from the Jordan Marsh Company, goods from James A. Houston & Company, goods from W. H. Brine & Company, goods from High School at Dorchester Heights, goods from the Friendly Society of the South Congregational Church, goods from the Concord Woman's Club, one hundred and seven dozen pairs of stockings from the Star Theater Company, goods from the Women's Guild of the Church of the Good Shepherd, and gifts from G. B. H. Macomber.

The spirit the citizens themselves showed, compelled admiration from every outsider. They were courageous, to say the least, and the general sentiment among them was not downheartedness, but determination to relieve the suffering at once, and then to reestablish the municipality on a better basis than formerly.

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

The people fully appreciated the generosity shown them throughout the State, and more than one, big, strong, able-bodied man felt a lump come into his throat when he read of and saw the many things that were being done by strangers outside of the city for its relief.

Two days after the fire the city had hundreds of unemployed at work clearing the streets. Judge Bossom announced that until conditions were relieved he would deal stringently with drunkards and other law breakers, and suiting his actions to his words, gave four men arrested the night after the fire the full penalty allowed by the law.

The prompt and systematic organization for relief gave assurance to the people of the State that their funds would be wisely directed in relieving the needs of the people and resulted in private purses being opened in a most generous and liberal way.

Lee, Higginson & Company received

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

sums ranging from a few dollars up to several thousand, aggregating in the neighborhood of \$350,000.

In spite of all that was done in the city there was not room for all, and the surrounding towns and cities made Chelsea's needs their own. The Revere Town Hall was thrown open to the refugees, the Revere Women's Club taking care of one hundred and fifty at night and feeding more during the day.

In Malden Saint Paul's Episcopal Church, the First Baptist Church, the Congregational, the Methodist, and the Catholic churches were thrown open to the needy.

Everett, Medford, and Winthrop also took care of many of the destitute. The Civil Service House in Boston was opened from the beginning of the trouble, and most of the lost children were sent there. The Boston English High School opened its doors and took care of about one hundred refugees as long as was necessary.

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

A monster dramatic entertainment was held at the Boston Theater, and all the actors playing in Boston at the time gave their services. The entire proceeds were given to the relief fund. The best seats sold at large premiums, and every seat and all standing room was taken.

Mrs. Pelbouth of the Dennison House, offered the service of women connected with that institution; the Wayfarers' Lodge accommodated two hundred men; the Bay State House on Hanover Street took care of from thirty to forty; the Parker Memorial on Appleton Street offered the use of its rooms; H. F. Denny of the Lakeshore Home, Sharon, took care of fifty women and children; Sister Gabriel of the home for Destitute Children offered shelter for children left homeless; about five hundred people found shelter at the Salvation Army Palace; the Saint James Hotel, Bowdoin Square, Boston, offered to take care of a number; the Massachusetts General Hospital offered employment to five men and

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

agreed to take twenty to thirty sick people and supply nurses.

The Animal Rescue League sent men to Chelsea to look out for the homeless dogs and cats in the burned district. Those suffering from injuries were at once chloroformed; the others were taken to the Carver Street Home and held for owners to claim.

Help of every description was offered to man and beast. It came quickly and in abundance without being called for; and those who wondered during the fire if there was a God, soon found him in the hearts of the people of the Commonwealth.

CHAPTER XII

CHELSEA'S FUTURE

In spite of the fact that no municipality in the State ever had such a blow as Chelsea, which lost millions of taxable property and fully one third of its population, the city has a glorious future before it. Of this there is no doubt. It will be rebuilt, bigger and better in every way. It will be a different kind of a city, however. The conservative people, who have lived in their old houses year after year, although the environment about them had changed, will in many cases rebuild in different sections of the town. The old style of architecture will give way to the new. There will be a relocation of schools and churches, and the City Hall and other

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

public buildings will be more conveniently located. Streets will be widened and laid out differently in many cases, and the old houses and buildings which had been remodeled into stores along Broadway will be replaced by fine business blocks of brick and concrete construction. Hardly had the smoke of the fire cleared away when the people turned their thoughts towards rebuilding.

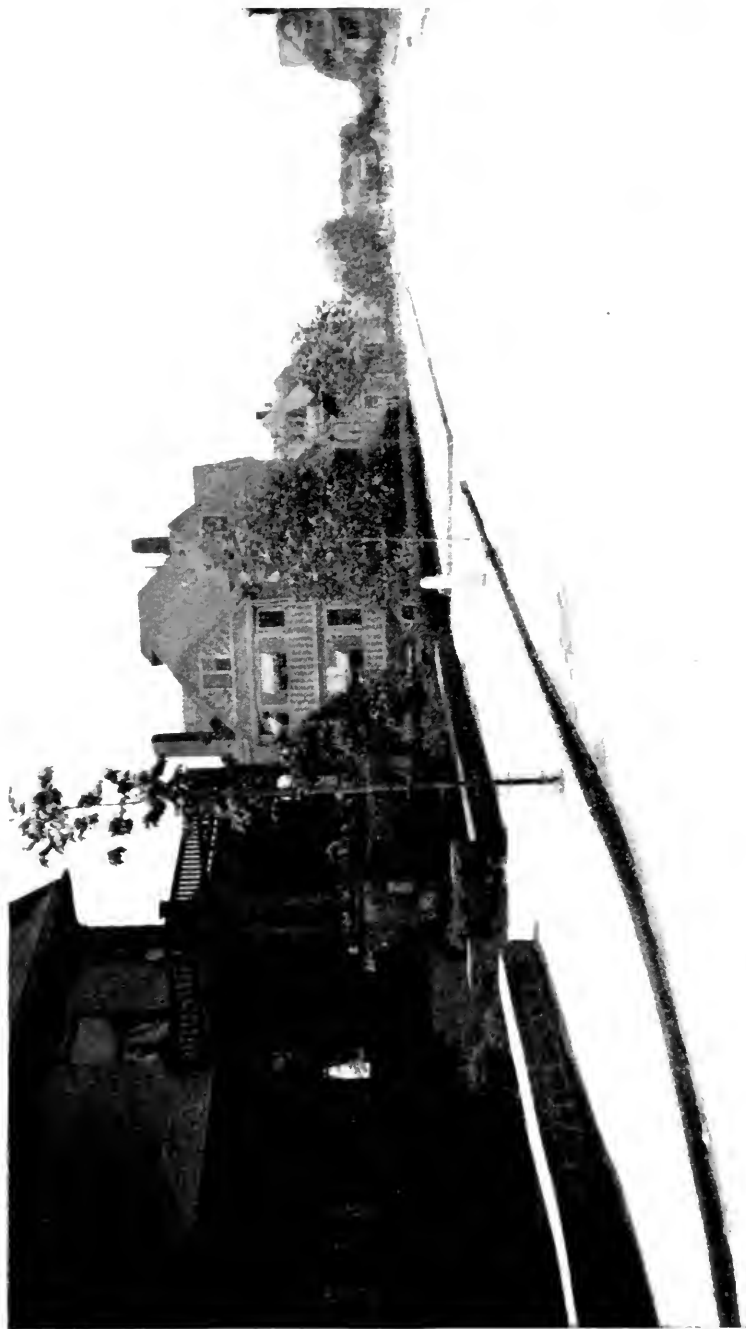
Chelsea is the home of many able and influential people, representing large manufacturing, banking, political, and professional interests. These men, who had their business and property interests at stake, decided that to secure confidence in the city and rapid rebuilding was impossible under the existing city charter, but that if a board of five competent men were appointed by the governor and given the power of the mayor, Board of Aldermen and School Committee for five years, it would be possible. The appointment of such a board or commission, it was believed, would cut out

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

all political strife. A bill was therefore introduced and at a hearing held on April 28 at the State House nearly all the prominent citizens were present. As a matter of record the following speeches are of interest, showing, as they do, the general feeling of the people.

Mayor John E. Beck spoke as follows:—

“We have come to the conclusion, regardless of everything else in the city, that legislation is needed to promote the welfare and future of our city. Nearly five hundred acres have been destroyed by the fire, and now we are confronted with the task of rebuilding the city. We have agreed, I believe, in the city of Chelsea, almost to a man, that if we have Chelsea’s future at heart, and we believe that her future must be protected, that legislation of this kind is needed. Political ambition and other things of that nature must be eliminated. We have come to you as a unit from the city of Chelsea, to ask you gentle-



COUNTY ROAD, IN THE RESIDENTIAL SECTION

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

men of the committee to give us this bill. It will then be in the hands of the governor to appoint whom he sees fit, citizens, as the members of that commission, so long as they are of our own citizenship. We can then bring back the confidence that is desired, and build a more beautiful and substantial Chelsea than before. The mayor or Board of Aldermen lack the power to do what is now needed to accomplish this work. The work of reconstruction must be carried on by a body, independent in action, and as a citizen, I wish to further those things which are of essential benefit to every inhabitant of our city. This cannot be accomplished by politics. This is my first year as mayor; I am willing to sacrifice that and all my own political ambitions, that our city may prosper in this year of progress and take its place among the leading cities of the Commonwealth. A bill of this nature carries with it the one thought, that we must have the best men possible;

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

in order to restore confidence and thus secure results which will insure the future and best interest of the city."

Congressman Ernest W. Roberts said:—

"The little I have to say will be as a citizen of Chelsea, a resident of that municipality for over forty years. Chelsea of to-day is not a city of wealthy people. You have heard from the city treasurer somewhat of the losses that we have sustained. If our city is to be rehabilitated, if we are to become once more a flourishing municipality, it is necessary in the first instance to restore confidence, both in the people now living in Chelsea and those who have been forced out of the city by reason of this fire, and what is much more important, the confidence in financial men in the future of that city. We have got to have large amounts of money poured into the city to rebuild it, and without that basic principle of confidence in the future of the city we are not going to

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

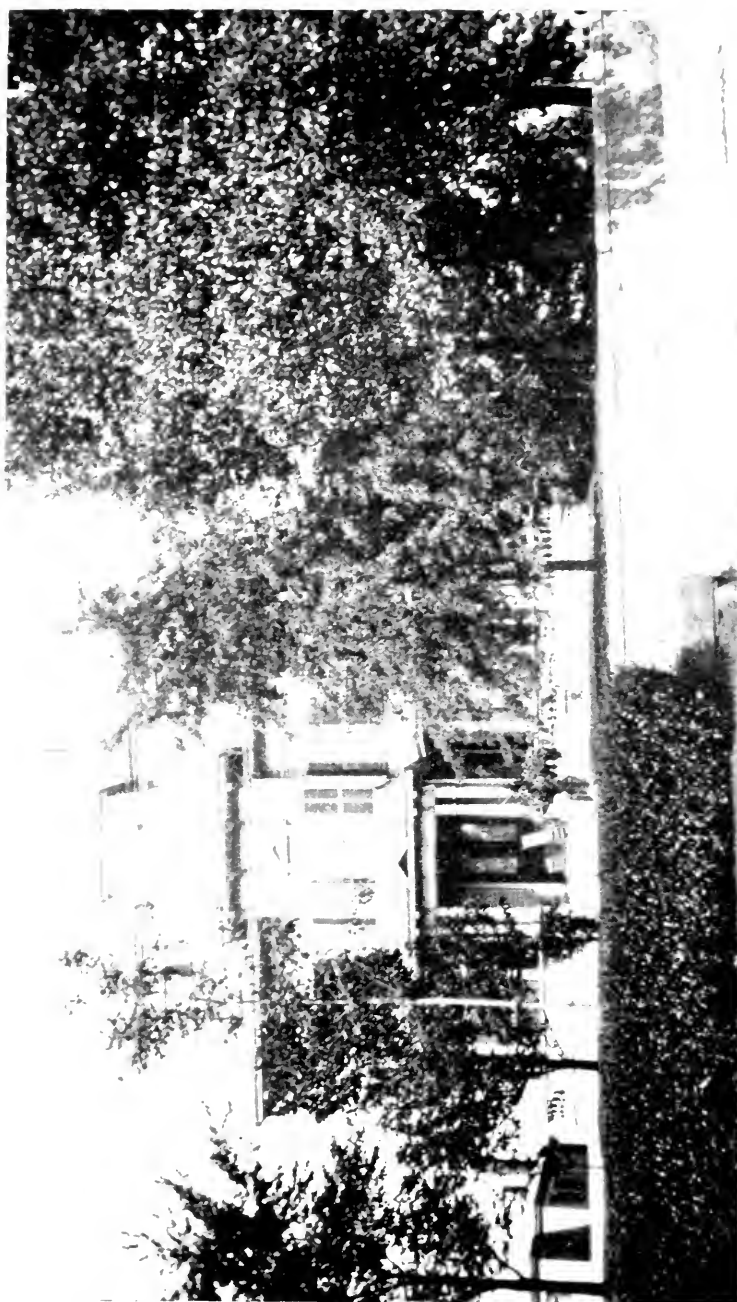
get the money. I am not in favor of government by commission, but there are times and conditions when it seems to me that the commission is the only solution of the problem, and I firmly believe to-day that the question confronting the people of Chelsea can only be solved through a commission. Without a commission there would be a lack of continuity of government, so essential for the successful solution of the problem that now confronts the people of Chelsea. Through a commission a comprehensive scheme can be laid out and can be carried out, step by step. After its conclusion and when the commission has done that work, the government of the city can be turned back to its citizens under its present plan, or such other plan as the conditions then presented to the city and country may warrant. I am not here to argue for every line in the bill, but I am in favor of the basic idea of the bill, which is a commission which shall have a fixed

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

tenure of office in order that there may be given to those men sufficient time to carry out their plans. If your bill does not provide enough time, you are not going to accomplish what we want, and that is the creation of confidence among monied men. I would suggest for the consideration of the committee one possible amendment, and that would be towards fixing a definite sum of money which the commission could raise by the issue of bonds. It would seem to be wise not to leave the matter entirely open in the bill as it is to-day."

Hon. Willard Howland spoke as follows:—

"I think there has been wiped out no single complete ward. The area of the city is fourteen hundred acres, and about four hundred and ninety have been devastated. That is a strip about six thousand feet long and one thousand feet wide. It is estimated that about \$8,000,000 of its taxable property has



THE WENTWORTH RESIDENCE AMONG THE PLACES NOT DESTROYED

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

been destroyed. This bill comes before you as the result, I think, of a very great concerted action among all the citizens. Necessarily, some one must take the lead. Shortly after the fire, within a day or two, representatives of the financial interests and the insurance interests, manufacturing and other interests of the city, were called together by some few representative men and others and discussed the prospective needs of the city. The great problem is the one of to-morrow, and it was believed that inasmuch as a very large proportion of the property destroyed must be rebuilt by capital borrowed for the purpose, the essential was a large degree of confidence in the city's ability to go forward and pay the debts which it would be obliged to incur, a confidence which it was necessary to reestablish, if it had been destroyed. Now it is true that the fire passed through largely the residential portion of the city, and on both sides of the fire-swept district remain many business enter-

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

prises. I think there were thirty-seven of the various institutions represented in the consideration of this matter, for we have some manufacturers there who employ a thousand men and whose payroll amounts from \$10,000 to \$11,000 a week. The people's opportunity for employment has not been interrupted, but their homes have been destroyed. It is intended to rebuild them, but the constitutional limitations would prevent our asking for aid for the accomplishment of that purpose. That must come through the confidence of private investors in our ability to rebuild and maintain our city.

“I think, however, it may be said that there are three propositions on which we agree absolutely, and that is, that there should be at this time a commission appointed to take charge of financial affairs and administer the government for the city. I think we are agreed that the commission should be appointed by the governor with the advice of the

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

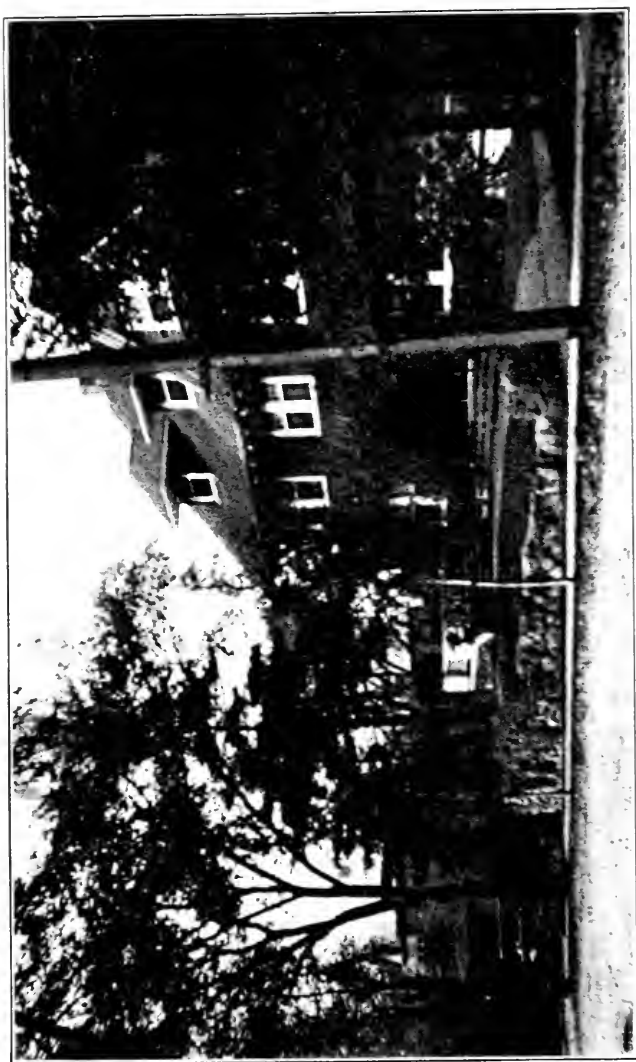
council. There is necessity for the State's assistance to be rendered in this emergency. We differ on some things which I think are not so essential as those things upon which we agree. I think that the appointment of the commission should be in the hands of the governor, without the limitation as made. We are not agreed as to the terms of the commission, that is, the length of time that it should serve. My own opinion of that is this, that we should appoint a commission for such term as should be sufficient to warrant the opinion that some policy could be defined and carried out. If the Legislature chooses at some future time to change the situation, they can do so. If any citizen desires a change, he, individually, or they, collectively, can come to the Legislature and ask for a change. If government by commission is to the satisfaction of all citizens, it may continue without further legislation. The necessity is apparent and I think nine tenths of the

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

citizens are in favor of the bill. You may feel that some of its elements should be changed or limitations made, and, of course, that is open to your consideration."

Others who appeared in favor of the commission were: Judge Albert D. Bosson, Ex-Mayor Carter, Ex-Mayor Mitchell, A. B. Atwood, Rev. R. Perry Bush, Hon. James Gould, William Martin, Hon. H. W. Pratt, Walter C. Mitchell, Ex-Mayor Strahan, Benjamin F. Dodge, Colonel Moses, Councilor Hoag, Charles G. Roberts, H. P. Sanborn, Royal S. Wentworth, C. Willis Gould, John Duncan, William Prescott, George H. Buck, Reinhard E. Bartels, Lorenzo D. Dixon, George H. Dunham, Hon. Eugene T. Endicott, George B. Guild, Ralph W. E. Hopper, Andrew T. Hunnewell, Geo. E. Morrill, Herbert L. Slade, Henry H. Stickney, Leonard A. Treat, Walter Whittelsey, and James S. Wilson.

The hearing was practically unanimous in favor of the bill as presented.



RESIDENCE OF EX-MAYOR PRATT IN THE PRATTVILLE DISTRICT
ONE OF THE MANY ATTRACTIVE PLACES IN CHELSEA NOT BURNED

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

The next day two other bills were put in, not greatly different, and after a tiresome delay a combination of the three was made up by the Committee on Metropolitan and City Affairs and put before the Legislature. The bill quickly passed the Senate, only to be held up in the House, but finally after a lengthy debate passed, to the general satisfaction of all those who had the best interest of Chelsea at heart.

It is pretty safe to say that any commission the governor appoints will prohibit light and flimsy buildings. This will tend more than anything else to drive out the undesirable citizens.

This commission will not be prejudiced for or against any particular ward, neither will the members have any constituents to care for to the detriment of the city.

Although Chelsea has an attractive residential district, which was not destroyed by the fire, as can readily be seen by the illustrations, it never again

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

will be the residential city that it was fifty years ago, as the area is too limited and the shipping facilities make it too valuable for anything but manufacturing purposes.

When the work of dredging, now in progress along the water front, is completed the city will have a mile of valuable wharf property, which is bound to bring more business into the city and to increase the valuation.

The shoe factories, which employ thousands of people, were just outside the burned area, which was fortunate for the employees, who lost their homes. Most of these people carried some insurance and can rebuild as long as they are assured of employment.

The Chelsea Trust Company proposes to erect a fine building entirely for their own use. The Chelsea Savings Bank has bought additional property, and in rebuilding will double the size of its former building.

The city is assured of a hundred and

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

twenty-five thousand dollar Post-office. Ex-Mayor Strahan proposes to rebuild his beautiful home on Bellingham Hill.

The Frost Hospital drew \$35,000 insurance, and as much more is assured to build a new hospital.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts will certainly provide Chelsea with a fine armory to replace the one destroyed.

Most of the churches will at once start to rebuild; and when the city gets its many buildings up, it will not be long before many new and desirable people will locate in Chelsea.

An attempt is to be made to get the Metropolitan Park Commission to secure permission from the United States government and carry out the plans originally made during Mayor Pratt's administration for a Marine Park along the Mystic River in front of the Naval Hospital.

At that time John D. Long was Secretary of the Navy and was interested

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

to the extent of visiting Chelsea and inspecting the project. It was found, however, that the cost of filling would be too great.

Since then the government has appropriated money to dredge the Mystic River, and the only expense would be to move the sea wall out several hundred feet to the low-tide mark. The dredging could then be done by the new hydraulic system, thus saving carting the dirt out to sea to be dumped.

This improvement would not only greatly help Chelsea, but would make the hospital grounds and neighborhood much healthier.

The residents of Chelsea are determined to drive out the Hebrew junk dealers, and the insurance companies are helping by canceling all policies on rag shops. The people of Chelsea have tolerated these undesirable citizens as long as they propose to; fire after fire of incendiary origin has taken place until there is no alternative, — they have got to go.

THE BURNING OF CHELSEA

As terrible as the fire was, God saw it was for the best, and in a very few years the people are going to look at it in the same way. The new city which is about to spring up will take the place that the Chelsea of the sixties held, — excelled by none, and better than most.

THE END

Portrait
1 Plan
ab

